A large, solid orange arrow points from the upper right towards the bottom right, framing the word "Strategy." in the bottom right corner.

Strategy.

Welcome.

You Spoke. We Listened and We Are Changing. We are excited to deliver our 2024-27 Strategy for Newman Students' Union. This document is the culmination of the broadest insight and engagement process in our history. We spoke to over 14% of the student body at Newman as well as key stakeholders in the University and pre-university entry students at Halesowen College. You told us about your interests and passions and where your concerns and barriers lie.

From talking to you in focus groups, or in the many interactions we had over our 'Let's Talk' Week, we realised that the direction we had been heading in needed to change, to best meet your needs now and for your future.

In the shadow of Covid-19, we had spent too long trying to replicate what student life looked like before the pandemic, and this just didn't fit how you wanted your Students' Union to be. During our Strategic Review process, we stripped the Union back to first principles, recognised what we are great at and where we should spend our time improving.

Our process has also covered a comprehensive governance review, in order to bring our structures and guiding documents in line with our new direction. This will be concluded in the summer of 2024.

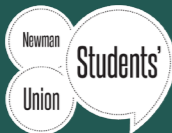
From listening to your views and working with Union staff and Officers over the past six months, we will be focusing our efforts over the next three years on developing services and initiatives around 4 key themes: *Voice, Support, Community and Wellbeing.*

With those themes in place and a clear understanding of what students want from their Students' Union, we are confident that this strategy represents a great way forward for the Students' Union at Birmingham Newman University.

This strategy will inform how we plan operationally year on year, to take into account changes in student need and the manifestos of our elected Student Officers.

We hope you enjoy reading our plan for Newman Students' Union and engaging with us over the next three years.

Zoe Harrison **Robin Pitt**
Union President 22-24 Union Director



OUR VISION.

Empower you to use your voice and find your place now and for the future.

OUR MISSION.

We exist to ensure students have every opportunity to grow and excel at Birmingham Newman University by:

- Using our influence to ensure that the Student Experience you expect and deserve is the one that you receive. Campaigning on the issues that you care about on and off campus, in and out of your studies. Making sure your **voice** is heard and acted upon.
- Providing a welcoming environment for students to share their lives at Newman, no matter what that looks like and offering the **support** to make the best of that journey.
- Enabling and supporting activities, events and initiatives that help you find your place in a vibrant, inclusive and diverse **community**.
- Providing space and opportunities for you to explore new interests, hobbies, cultures and experiences to enhance and maintain your **wellbeing** during your time at Newman and develop skills for the future.

OUR VALUES.

As a democratic, student-led charity we always have our members' interests at the centre of how we work, plan, think and organise. Our democratic values are complemented by our commitment to social justice, to making University fun, enriching and rewarding. As an organisation we are committed to demonstrating the following values in all of our decision making and outputs.

Inclusive

We recognise that the community at Newman is diverse and we celebrate that in everything we do. We will always try to ensure that our services, opportunities and processes are accessible and relevant to all members of that community. We celebrate our differences and work to embed inclusivity in all we do.

Independent

While we enjoy a great working relationship with the University, we will be bravely independent in representing your interests. We will be a 'critical friend' to the University that champions your voice and ensures your experience is at the heart of all decisions it makes.

Quality

We know that as a small organisation, we have some limitations in the scope of what we can achieve. While we recognise those constraints, we will always strive to deliver excellent outputs in everything we do. We aim to be the experts in student life at Newman and ensure that you have an excellent student experience.

Ethical

Our members expect us to operate in a way that creates positive impact on their lives and on the wider community. We will be ethical in how we conduct our business and in our decision making processes. We want to hand over the Union to many generations of students in the future and recognise the impact of what we do today.

Agile

We are living in a time of change, perhaps as rapid as any generation before. As an organisation we will always test and listen to views of students to ensure we are relevant to our members. Through efficient business planning, we will react to those changes with the same pace that they emerge.

Sustainable

In order for us to provide excellent services and opportunities we must ensure that our systems and our finances are efficient and effective. We will invest in technology and the training of our staff to ensure our resources are used ethically, effectively and always in the interests of our members.

OUR JOURNEY.

The Union entered its Strategic Review process in October 2023. This process followed a period of transition following completion of the previous strategy. This period of transition was necessary to lay some of the foundation blocks in the Organisation's finances, staffing and operational policies that had previously been missing.

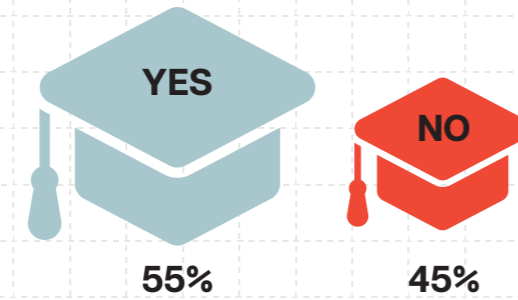
Keeping students at the very centre of our planning, we entered into the broadest insight project undertaken in the Union's history. The results shown here have directly influenced our direction for the next 3 years.

WE SPOKE TO OVER

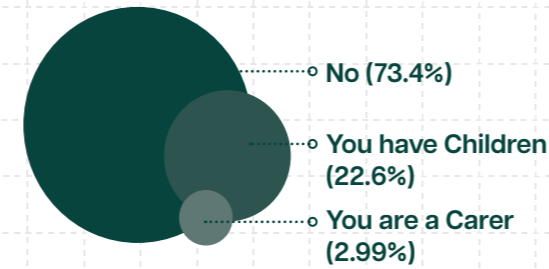
14%

OF NEWMAN STUDENTS

First person in your family to go to University.



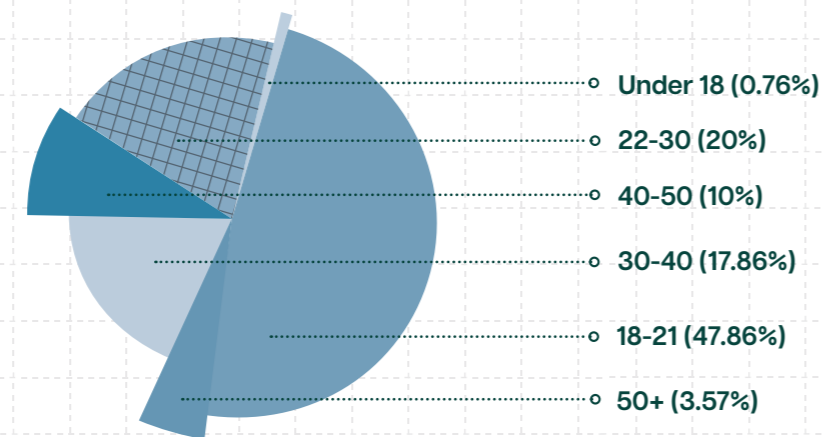
Do you have any dependants?



How relevant is your Students' Union?



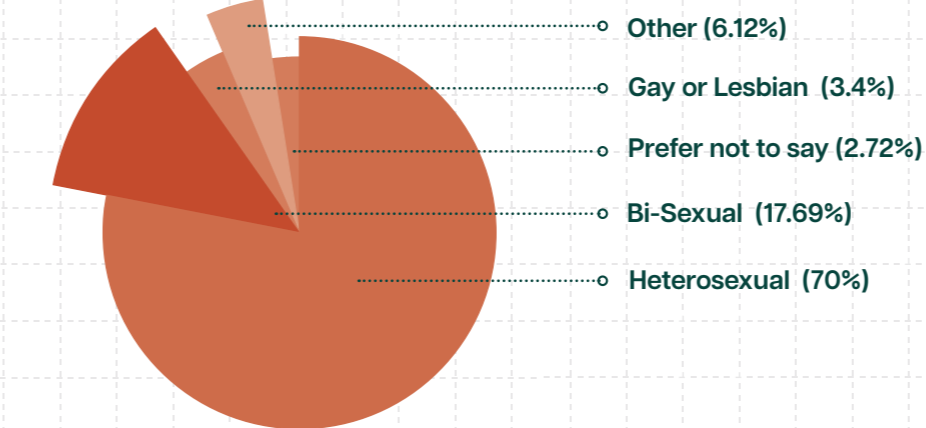
Which age bracket do you fall into?



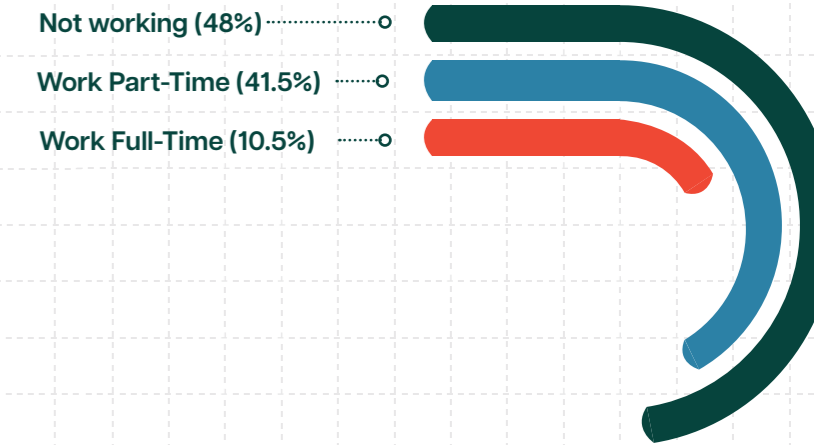
Strategic Review Timeline 2023/24



How do you describe your sexuality?



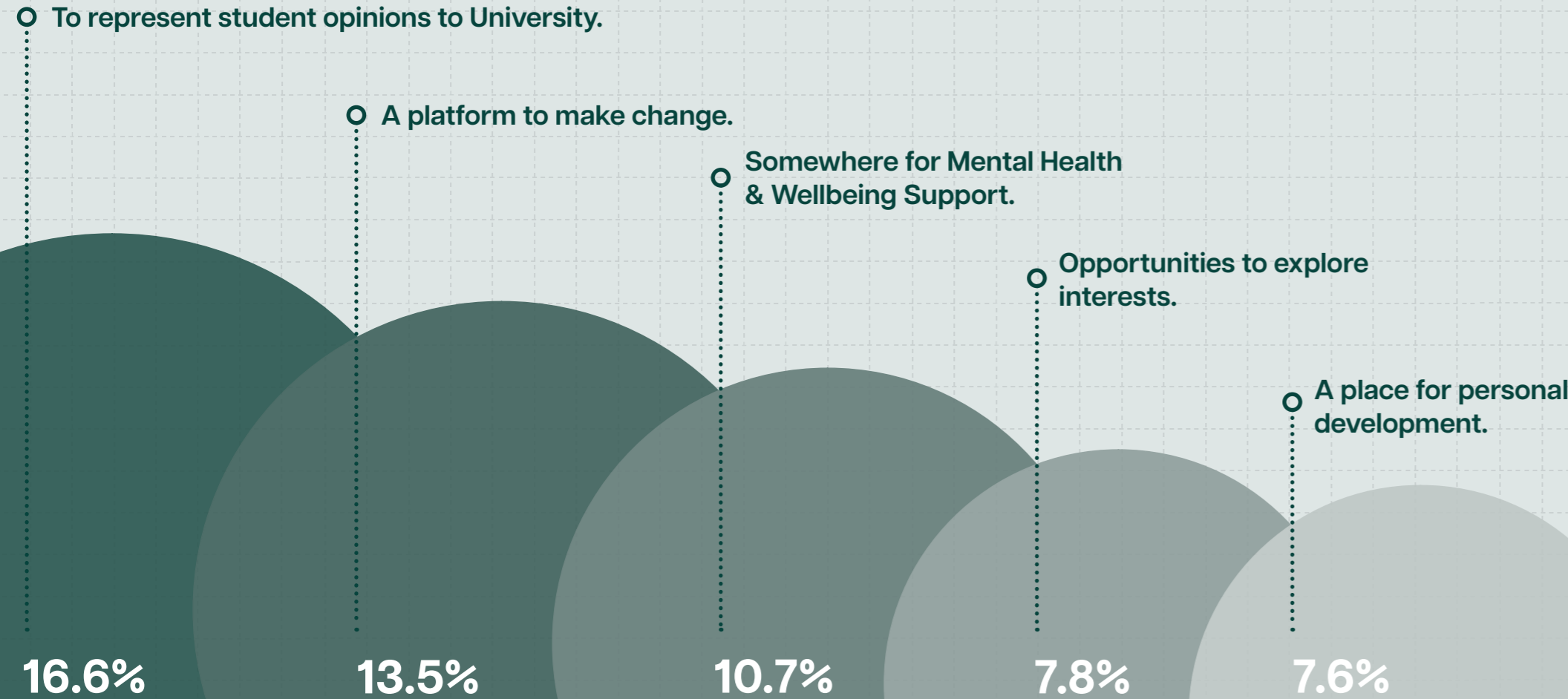
Do you work alongside your studies?



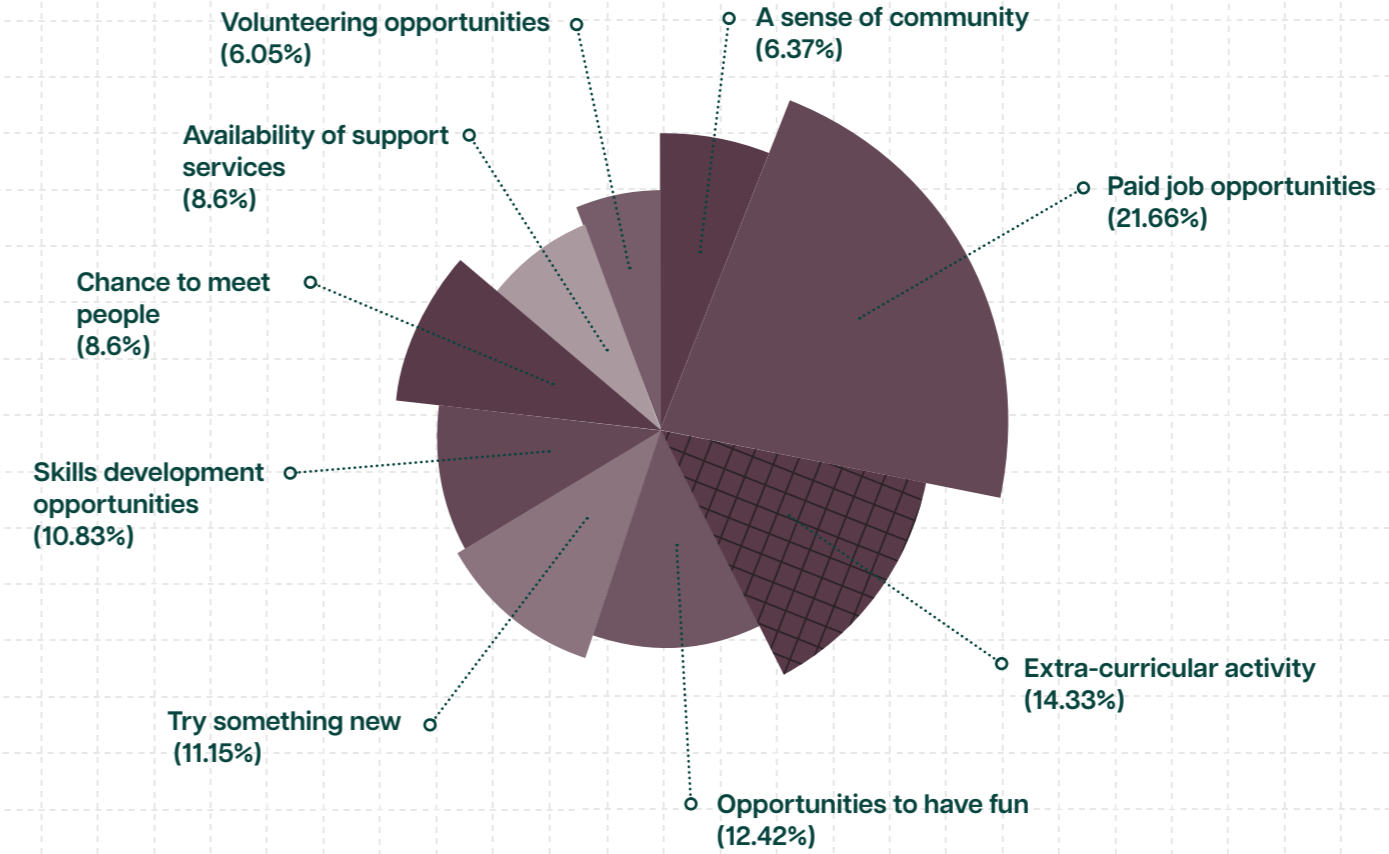
OUR JOURNEY.

'I would like them to improve how minorities and oppressed groups are treated inside and outside of the University.'

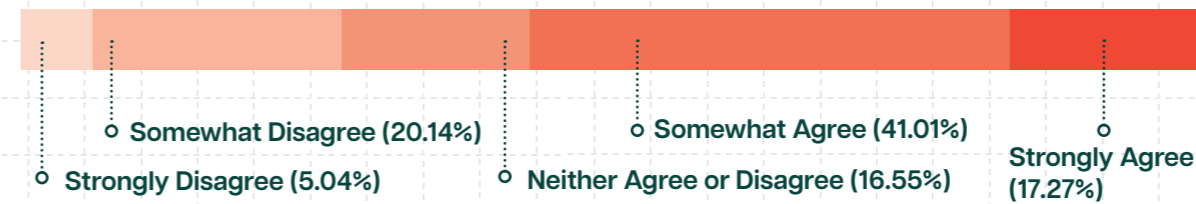
What do you think the Students' Union's top 5 priorities should be?



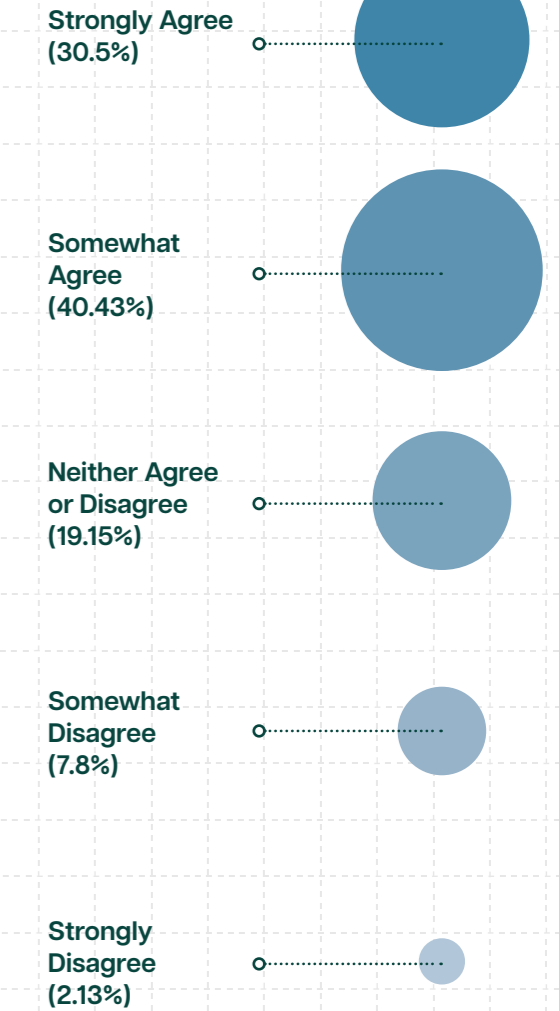
Outside of your academic course, what is missing from your University experience?



You are fully aware of the range of services the Students' Union offers.



The University offers a range of opportunities to get involved in.



VOICE & SUPPORT.

During your time studying, have you faced any mental health challenges that affected your academic performance or overall wellbeing?

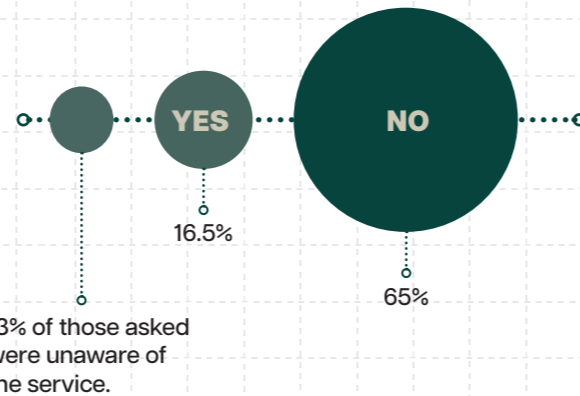


**52%
REPLIED
YES**

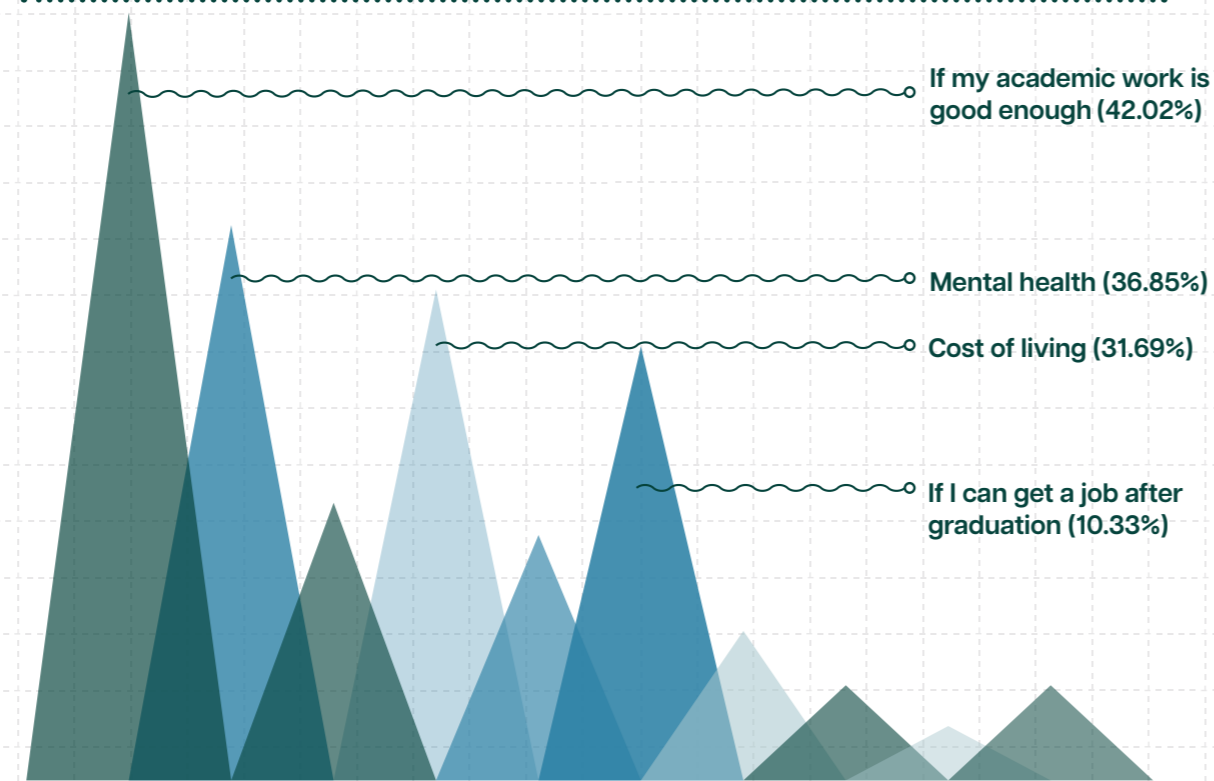
Have you ever used the Union Advice Service?

During the transition year of 2023/24, we recruited a full-time Student Voice & Advice Co-ordinator. This added additional capacity and expertise to this area. Alongside this, we improved our tracking and analysis provision for advice, giving us access to improved data in this area.

Demand for the service saw a dramatic upturn during this period with 20% more cases handled than the previous year and a growth of 40% on 2021/22.

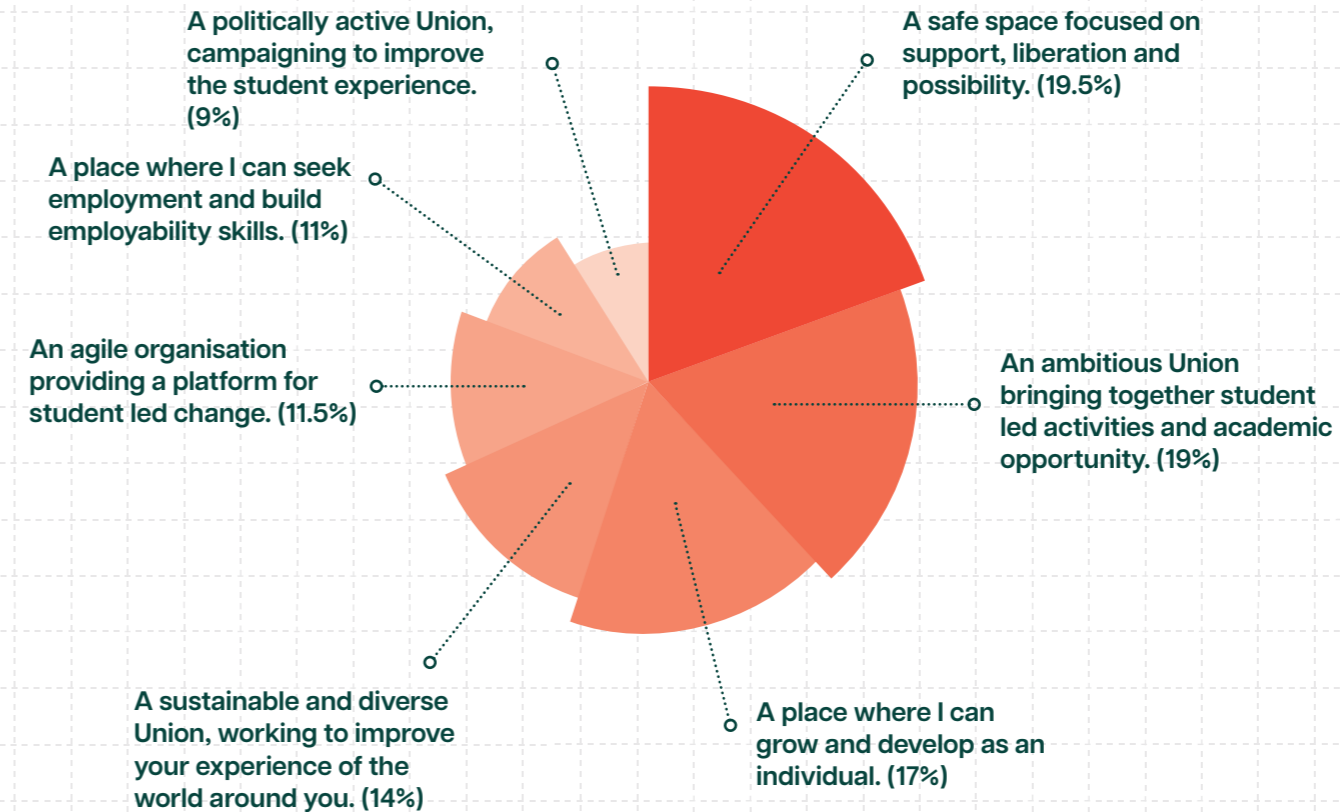


Your main worries at University.

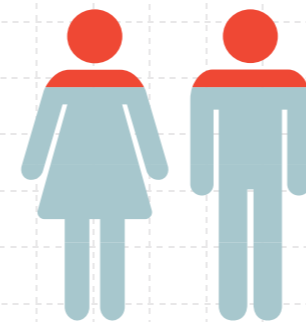


* Participants were asked to choose their top 3 worries.

What does an SU you want to be a part of look like?

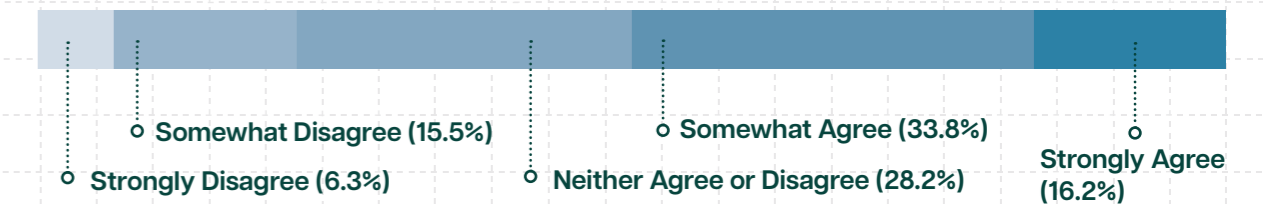


Do you know who your Course Rep is?

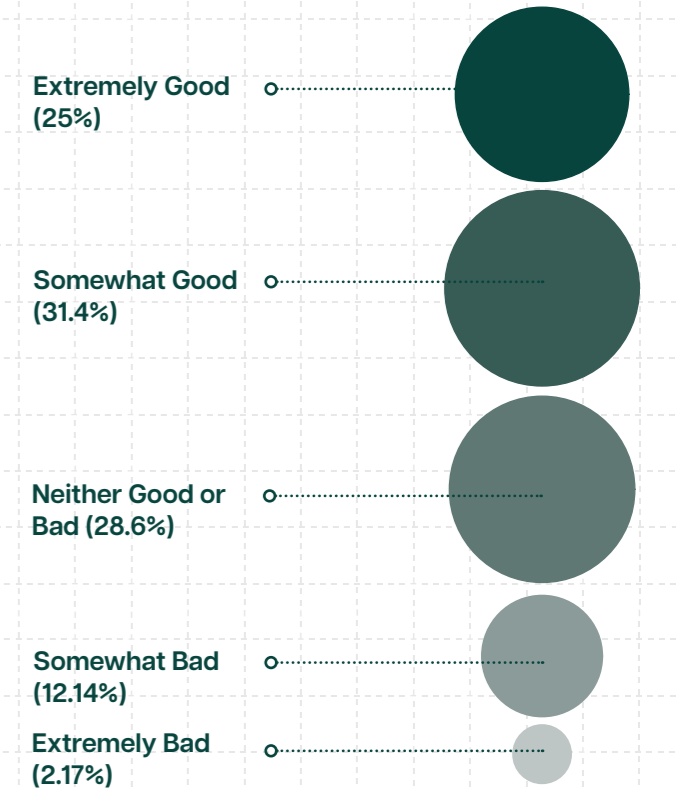


**73%
REPLIED YES.**

You are aware of Campaigns the Union has run?



Your awareness of Elected Officers.



VOICE & SUPPORT.

Here for a quiet chat or shout from the rooftops. As a Students' Union we represent the authentic view of the students, our representatives are 'elected' not 'selected'. We are here to empower you to find your voice and we put the structures and systems in place to ensure your voice is heard at every level of the University and in the wider world.

Through our Advice Service and our representative networks, we are also here to guide and support you when things don't go to plan. As the University grows and in a pressured world, this service is becoming ever more vital to the work of the Students' Union and we will react to your concerns and develop this service to best meet your needs.

We recognise that no two students are the same and we all have different needs; we are here to walk with you on your journey and ensure you have the student experience you expect and deserve.

Our research underpins just how diverse we are as a community; to celebrate and champion this, we will develop our governance structures to introduce Inclusion and Liberation Officers for the first time in our history.

ADVICE

Demand for our Academic Advice Service has seen enormous growth over the past two years. As the University aims to grow student numbers by more than 15%, we must strengthen our provision to continue to offer a high quality service to students. We recognise that meeting students academic advice needs is not sufficient and we will broaden the scope of our service. We will:

- ➔ De-mystify University policies and procedures, ensuring ease of access for all students.
- ➔ Broaden our service to provide high-quality, impactful signposting to appropriate services and providers.
- ➔ Grow our Advice Service Team by recruiting and training a team of Student Advisers from the Newman student body.

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

During our transition year, we saw the number of Academic Representatives grow by 25% to 277, including Course and Faculty Representatives. For the first year in 2023/24, the success of our Representatives were celebrated at the inaugural Academic Representative Conference & Awards (ARC). We see our Academic Representative network as central to our ability to champion student voice at the University. To develop this provision further and build on our successes, we will:

- ➔ Ensure an active, well trained and supported Course Representative is recruited for every course offered at the University.
- ➔ Embed a uniformed recruitment and training programme for all Academic Representatives.
- ➔ Enhance the Academic Representative experience, through tailored training, networking and development opportunities.

INCLUSION & LIBERATION

Our research tells us that 49% of you strongly agree that Newman is 'Inclusive of All Students'. We understand that through our campaigning and structure, we can play a key role in making both the Union and University more inclusive and champion the needs of under-represented groups. We will:

- ➔ Review our Governance Structure to establish Inclusion & Liberation Officers.
- ➔ Develop services, initiatives and events to meet the needs of students with caring and other responsibilities, to fit their timetables and expectations.

GOVERNANCE & DEMOCRACY

Having transparent, accessible and relevant governance and democratic structures is central to our existence and to providing the 'authentic' student voice. We have made some great steps towards increasing turnout in our Leadership Elections in recent years and in training and recruiting students to our part-time positions, representing student voice on University committees. In order for our governance structures to remain relevant and our officers to have a legitimate mandate, we will:

- ➔ Conduct a review and re-structure of the Union Governance structure, policies, procedures and constitution.
- ➔ Ensure our democratic processes are high-profile and accessible, attracting a diverse and representative range of candidates.

CAMPAIGNS

We will continue to amplify your voice on local and national issues that impact your time studying at Newman. We will ensure our student committee structures are open to all, to create a space for debate and discussion that influences the campaigning activity of the Union.

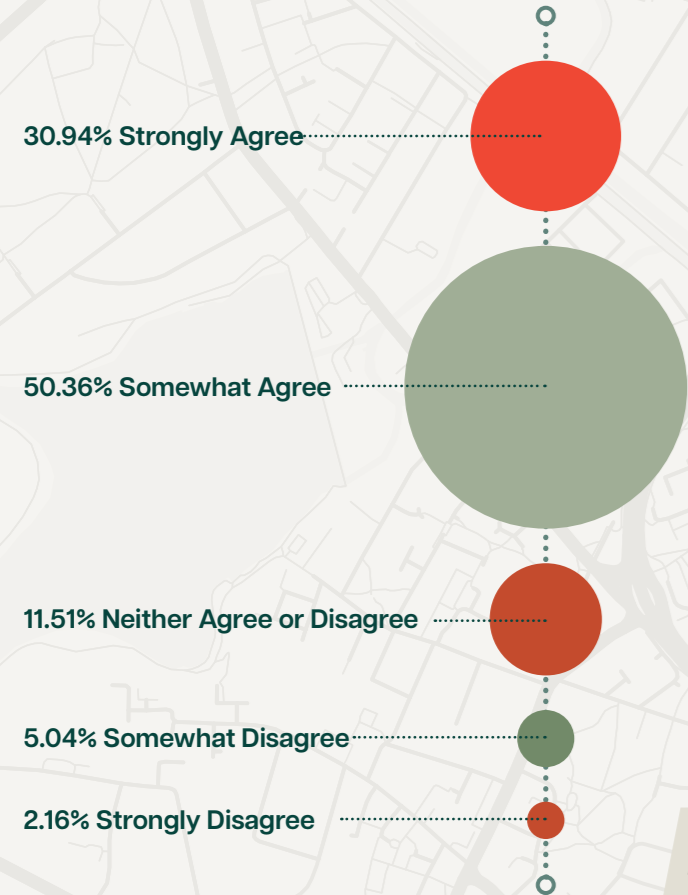
As a member of the National Union of Students, we will continue to champion the needs of Newman students at a national level and play an important role in shaping how the NUS work with Small and Specialist Unions.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

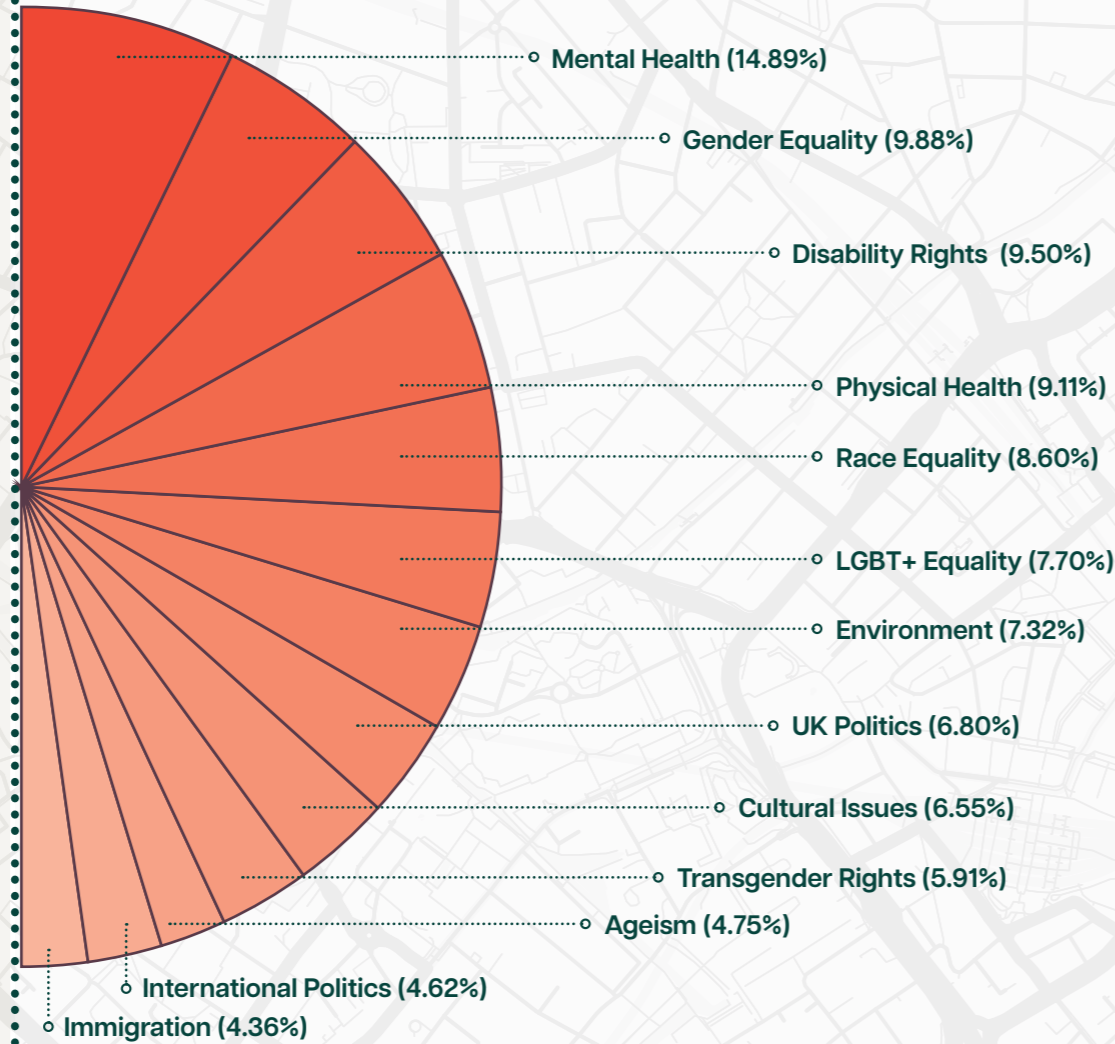
- ➔ Develop a range of resources, explaining key University academic regulations, procedures and policies.
- ➔ All Union Staff & Sabbatical Officers to receive Mental Health First Aid & Neurodiversity Awareness Training.
- ➔ 90% of Students are aware of the Union Advice Service (Annual Survey).
- ➔ All Undergraduate & Postgraduate courses have an Academic Representative recruited and trained by the Students' Union.
- ➔ A comprehensive employability and skills development programme is available to Academic Representatives.
- ➔ Full cohort of Inclusion & Liberation Officers elected and embedded in the work of the Union.
- ➔ Introduce a programme of events, projects and initiatives that are accessible for students who are parents and carers.
- ➔ Deliver a governance review and re-structure that best reflects the needs of the diverse Newman community.
- ➔ Develop our Elections processes to increase election turnout by year 3 to over 25% of the student population.
- ➔ To continue to have a positive response of over 80% to Question 24 of the National Student Survey.

COMMUNITY & WELLBEING.

The University Community fully meets my needs.

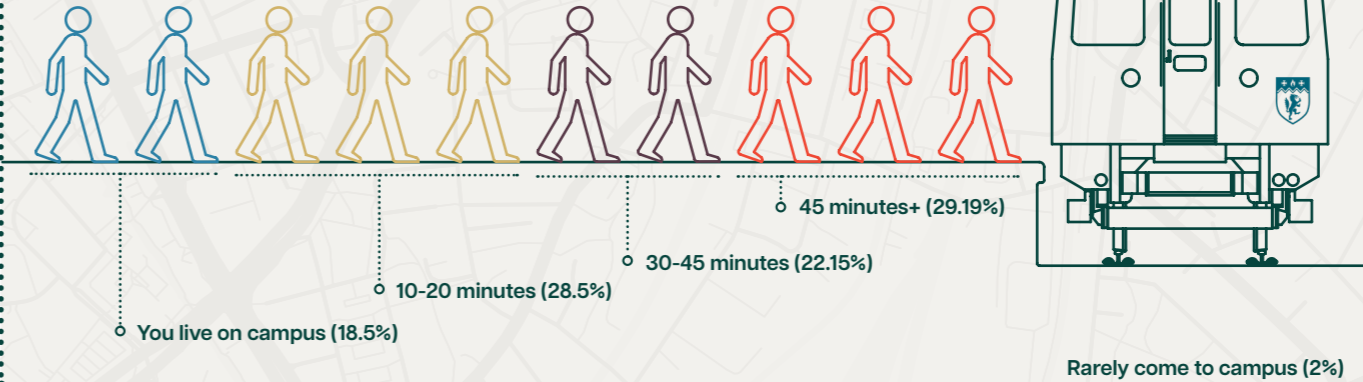


What are the issues affecting your community that interest you?

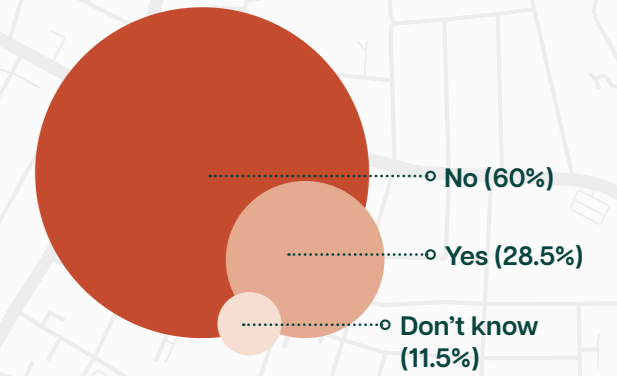


'More inclusion and events based for mature students, especially those not born with a computer in their hands.'

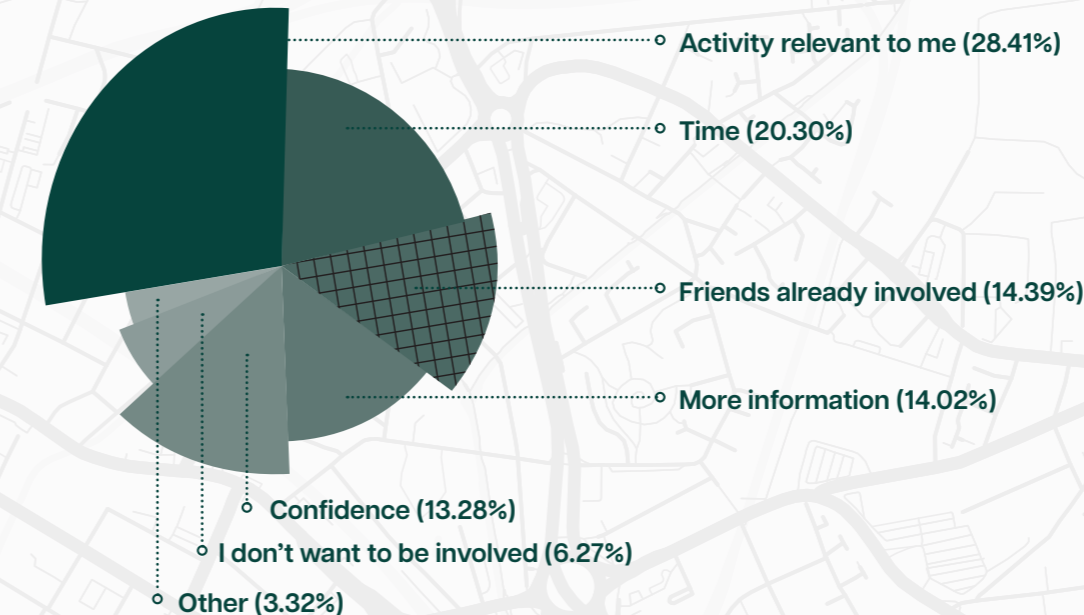
How long does it take you to get to University from home?



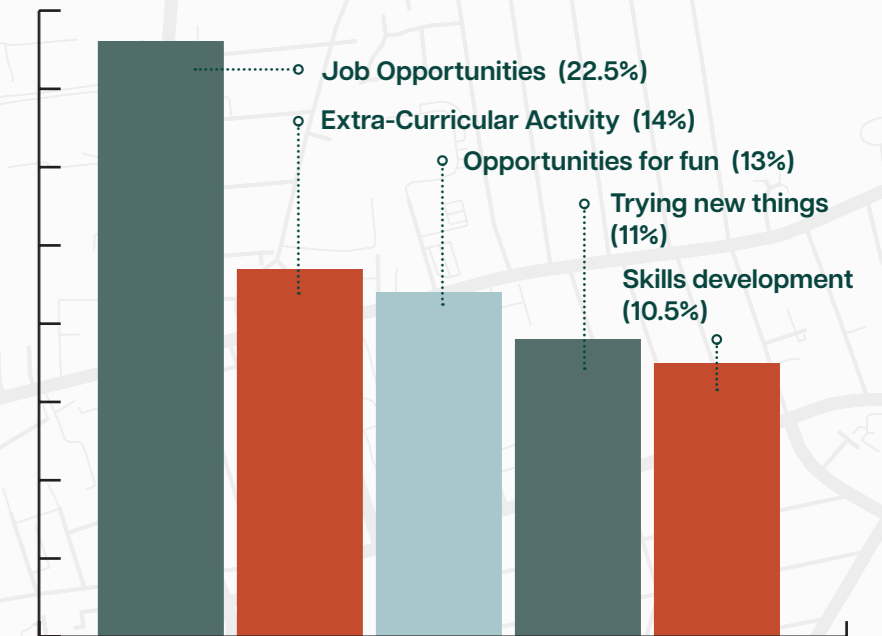
Have you ever attended a Union Event?



What would make you become involved with the Students' Union?



What is missing from your university experience?



* This graph shows the top 5 options from the online survey.

COMMUNITY & WELLBEING.

.....
Here to help you find your place now and for the future. Coming to University is a massive step in life, no matter what your journey so far. We are dedicated to making your transition into University life fun, engaging and enlightening, helping you create lasting memories and develop skills for the future. From induction and welcome to enabling you to share and celebrate the incredible mix of cultures, faiths and interests on offer at Newman. As a Students' Union we are here to provide the support for you to find your place in our community and if your place is yet to be defined, we will help you create that space to thrive.

From our research we know that a key motivator for you being at Newman is to pursue your academic studies and get a great job after graduation. As a part of adding to that experience, Academic Societies form a real strategic focus for us over the coming years, providing you with a space outside of lectures to explore your subject with other students across year groups and with your lecturers, in an informal and social setting. Alongside our Academic Societies, during the next three years we will be launching and embedding a peer-mentoring scheme to help your transition through University.

We recognise the pressures that student life can bring and you told us how your mental health has been affected. Through all of the activities of the Union we aim to promote wellbeing and are committed to supporting you with a broad range of student-led events, societies and activities during your time at Newman.

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ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES

.....

We know from our research that you are passionate about your studies and proud to be a student at Birmingham Newman University. To help you explore your studies further, critique ideas and debates outside of your lectures, arrange trips or just have a coffee and chat about your course, we introduced Academic Societies, of which every student is automatically a member, with no charge. We recognise the value of these Academic Communities and over the next 3 years we will develop these, and ensure they are well resourced and organised, so every student has the opportunity to play a part.

While being a part of a community around your course can be enriching and supportive, there is nothing like having someone to talk to from time to time. To support this, in partnership with the Student Success Department of the University, we will be launching a new peer-mentoring scheme to help you get the most out of student life. To embed Academic Communities within the wider Newman community, we will:

- **Provide a tailored approach to Departments to establish and embed Academic Societies to meet the needs of their students and staff.**
- **Provide adequate resources and staff support to ensure Academic Societies emerge and thrive.**
- **Closely align our Academic Representative system with Academic Societies to broaden student voice in how your course operates.**
- **Co-create a peer-mentoring scheme with the University to best support your transition through University.**

WELCOME & INDUCTION

.....

At whatever point in the year you join Newman, we want to be there to welcome you and introduce you to the opportunities and services we can provide. You told us that induction in the past had fallen short, we will work alongside the University to ensure every student has the opportunity of an amazing welcome and start to their student experience at Newman. We will:

- **Provide an amazing welcome to your time at Newman and introduce you to everything the Union has to offer and how you can be involved or start something new.**

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

.....

It has been great to see our student led societies emerge from under the dark cloud of Covid-19 and during our transition year we saw society numbers grow from 3 to 17. We are really keen to see a broader range of societies embedded into the community at Newman, providing avenues for students to learn new things, explore their hobbies, other cultures and faiths. We also know from our research that as a student body you are keen to be involved in community volunteering. To help foster a culture of student activities at Newman we will:

- **Remove barriers to starting and running a society and provide resources and support to help existing societies grow.**
- **Introduce development grants for societies or activities focused on the Arts, Culture or Wellbeing.**
- **Work with community organisations to identify and promote volunteering opportunities for our students.**

SOCIAL LIFE

.....

As a Union we do not have the facilities or space that other Students' Unions have to offer but that won't get in the way of us helping you socialise with your fellow students. We will continue to support student-led events and provide social events around campaign weeks, such as LGBT+ and Mental Health Awareness. In addition to these events, we will help you celebrate the big moments in the year such as Welcome Week, Christmas and the end of year.

Social life doesn't end at the doors of Newman, we are in a vibrant city with plenty of nightlife, culture and green spaces to enjoy. To help you find a social life inside and outside of Newman, we will:

- **Support student-led events, ensuring they are well resourced, planned and sustainable.**
- **Organise a series of major events to celebrate milestones throughout the year.**
- **Co-ordinate events throughout the year to help you explore Birmingham and the West Midlands.**

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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- **Deliver a programme of Academic Society development to Academic Department staff and Academic Representatives.**
- **All Academic Departments have an active Academic Society established by Year 3.**
- **90% of students are aware they are a member of an Academic Society (Annual Survey).**
- **Peer-mentoring scheme is piloted in Year 1.**
- **Provide a standalone Induction & Welcome programme throughout the year. 90% of students recognise what the Union has to offer (Annual Survey)**
- **Increase active societies to 35 in Year 3.**
- **Establish at least 2 societies/ activities per year with the Arts, Culture or Wellbeing funds.**
- **Organise at least 4 major student social events across the year.**
- **Provided support to at least 3 student-led social events per term.**
- **Deliver at least 1 social event per term, outside the Newman Campus.**

OUR ENABLERS.

We want Newman Students' Union to be the leading Small and Specialist Union in the UK. A Union that is well governed, efficient, agile and responsive to student needs. To do this we must employ innovative, ambitious and well considered business practices to support the outstanding representation and engagement offered by our Student Officers and members.

We enjoy a close relationship with a supportive, expanding University and for us and the Institution to succeed in challenging national and global times, we must foster excellent working partnerships across the Newman community.

We are part of a brilliant city and we want our students and the Union to play a part in that wider community as active citizens. To do this we must open our horizons to partners, sponsors and networks that help us establish our place in the West Midlands.

During our transition, we invested in our digital infrastructure and re-aligned our staffing structure to reflect the direction the students told us they wanted us to move in. The enablers we have identified to help us achieve our objectives in Voice & Support and Community & Wellbeing are the building blocks we will focus on over the next three years to help us achieve our ambitions.

PEOPLE

The Union relies upon a small team of staff, working alongside the student officers and volunteers to deliver its objectives. We have historically struggled to recruit and retain high quality staff members in order to make lasting impact. In order to give our members confidence in their Students' Union, it is crucial that we have a team of skilled, well trained professional staff. In order to achieve this, we will:

- ➔ Provide an outstanding environment for our staff to develop, receive training and progress professionally.
- ➔ Ensure we remain an inclusive, flexible and welcoming organisation to work for.
- ➔ Review our remuneration and benefits package to ensure we maintain parity with staff at the University and the wider SU sector.

PARTNERSHIPS

As a small Students' Union, part of a small University community, we rely very much on forging and maintaining excellent internal partnerships with other departments and service providers. These partnerships are key to both parties using the available resources in the most efficient and effective manner, avoiding replication of provision and providing an outstanding student experience. Outside of the Newman community, we are located in a city and a region with many strong Students' Unions, who provide a wealth of opportunities for collaborative and partnership working over the coming years.

In addition to other Students' Unions we have opportunities to work with external partner organisations and sponsors to best meet our objectives as an organisation. To harness these partnerships, we will:

- ➔ Strive to forge partnership working with key University departments in the establishment of new initiatives and projects.
- ➔ Work to embrace partnerships with organisations within Birmingham and the West Midlands to further enhance the student experience.

COMMUNICATION

In 2023/24 we introduced a new website and membership system, allowing us to communicate with our members in a variety of new ways, along with managing our democratic processes and online retail. Our research tells us that we have a long way to go in communicating effectively the full range of services that the Union offers to all students, as currently only 17% of you 'Strongly Agree' that you are aware of all we offer. What our research has also shown us is that you have an appetite for providing great quality feedback.

To best communicate what the Union is doing and respond to your feedback, we will:

- ➔ Deliver consistent, high quality communication around the Union offer, embedding our brand and ensuring recognition of our services and outputs.
- ➔ Implement regular feedback activities to gauge student need and opinion and act on our findings.

FINANCE

During our transition year, the Union underwent an overhaul of its financial systems and processes; introducing a new finance system and making a major shift towards developing a professional suite of financial management tools, along with partnering with Durham SU to provide key financial services. These developments have given the Union the financial confidence to use the resources it has effectively to deliver the best service it can for students.

The Union currently receives almost all of its income from the University in the form of a Block Grant. We recognise that the Higher Education sector as a whole faces a tough future financially and for the Union to grow we must diversify our income. Maintaining financial health will always be a key consideration for the organisation, to safeguard this, we will:

- ➔ Demonstrate our impact to the University and establish funding plans and models for long term investment in the Students' Union.
- ➔ Be innovative and entrepreneurial in our approach to additional funding opportunities.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ➔ Deliver a comprehensive HR Strategy, to include Personal Review and Development Planning for all staff members.
- ➔ Achieve 'Investors in People' accreditation.
- ➔ Forged lasting partnerships and projects with key internal departments: Chaplaincy, Student Success and Commercial Services.
- ➔ Deliver shared opportunities with at least 2 other West Midlands Students' Unions.
- ➔ Student recognition of the full range of Union services to rise to 90% Strongly Agree. (Annual Survey)
- ➔ Union presence across campus, taking information stalls to high footfall areas weekly.
- ➔ Improve our customer service to students in the Union Offices. Student Approval above 80%. (Annual Survey)
- ➔ Agree a 3 year funding model and headline budget with the University.
- ➔ Generate at least 15% of our income from our social enterprises and sponsorship.
- ➔ Streamlined financial processes for Club & Society leaders, removing barriers to activity.

