Jisc's digital experience insights

Digital experience through the eyes of students and staff

- Data on how students, teaching staff and professional services staff are using technology

- Designed to help organisations understand and improve the digital experience in further and higher education

- Provides baseline and benchmarking data to inform digital strategies

- Find out more at: **digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk**

Your digital experience and environment

Students and learners

Teaching staff

Professional services staff

- ✓ You and your technology
- ✓ Technology at your organisation
- ✓ Technology in your learning, teaching or role
- ✓ Developing your digital skills

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Listening to the voices of HE students

October 2022 – April 2023

27,131 student responses to our 2022/23 surveys from **40** universities across the UK

- These 40 organisations represent 13% of all HE providers in the UK

- Highest number of responses from a single organisation was 3,882 students (11% of their total student population)

- Mean number of responses was 678 per organisation (4% of total student population among participating organisations)

Full report available from:

https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/reports-and-briefings/our-reports/

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How digital poverty emerges in our surveys

- **A few (more) direct quantitative indicators:**
  - Help to buy/loan/given a suitable device
  - Mobile data costs
  - Ability to develop workplace related digital skills
  - Qualitative data
- **More indirect evidence**
  - Access to online resources
  - Working spaces
  - Learning and skills training opportunities

- **Demographic data** allows us to investigate experiences of different groups of students

- **We take a broad definition:**
  "Inability to interact with the online world fully, when, where and how an individual needs to", including "devices and connectivity, access, capability, motivation, and support and participation."
  (Digital Poverty Alliance)
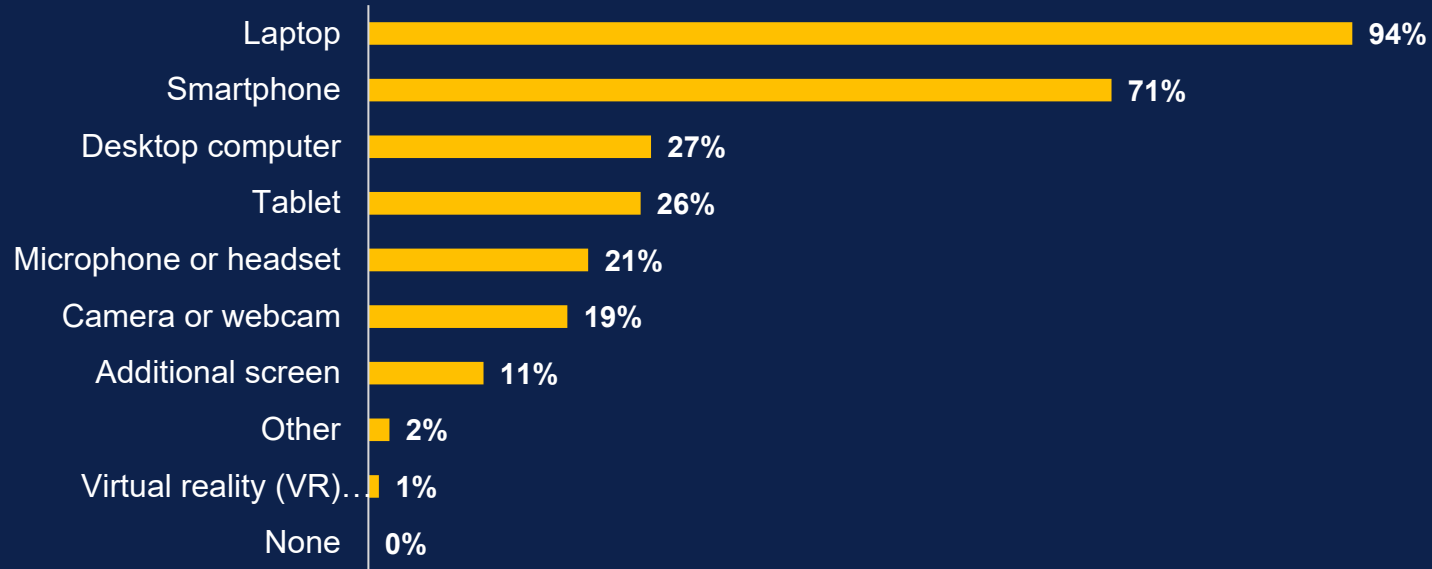
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Summary of key contextual data

- **63%** studying at undergraduate level, **29**% postgraduate level
- **63%** women, **34%** men, **1%** prefer not to say, **1%** self-describe
- **36%** respondents aged 19-21, **19%** 22-24, **23%** 30-59
- **67%** UK students, **30%** international (in UK), **3%** transnational (outside UK)
- **58%** White, **27%** Asian or Asian British, **9%** Black/Black British, Caribbean or African, **4%** Mixed
- **20%** stated they had learning differences, health conditions or impairments

Full contextual information available in downloadable reports:
https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/reports-and-briefings/our-reports

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Devices used for learning – 1

Which of these devices do you regularly use for learning?

Device	Percentage
Laptop	94%
Smartphone	71%
Desktop computer	27%
Tablet	26%
Microphone or headset	21%
Camera or webcam	19%
Additional screen	11%
Other	2%
Virtual reality (VR)…	1%
None	0%

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Devices used for learning – 2

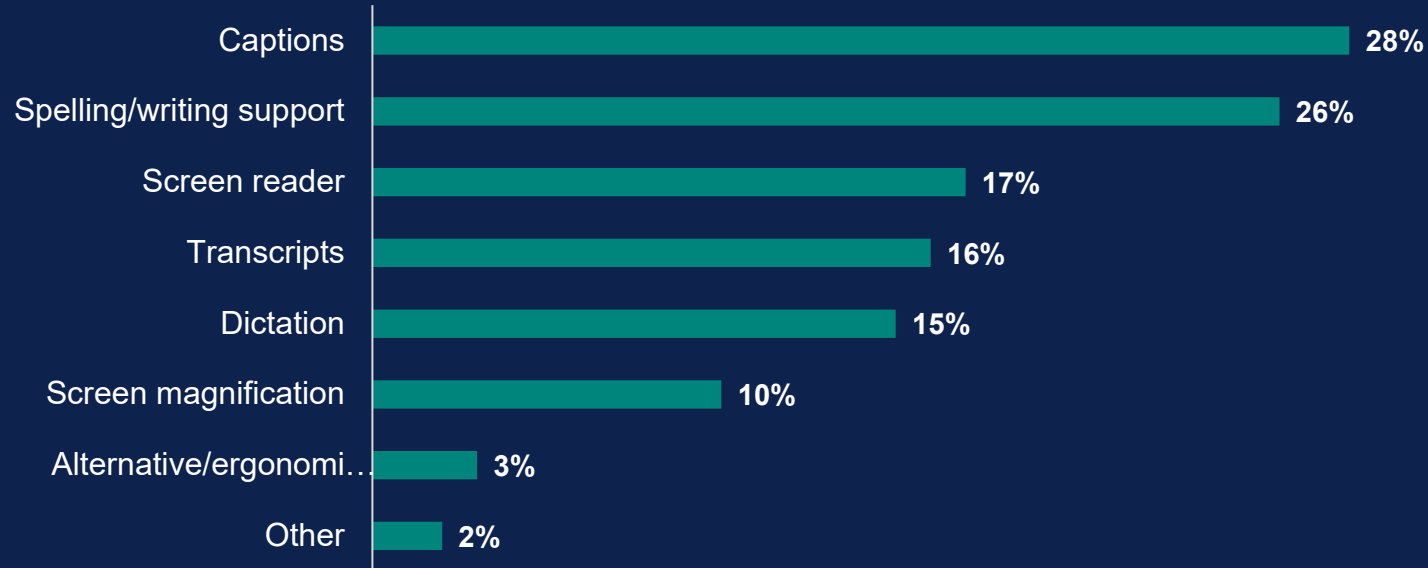- 1% **only** had access to a smartphone
- Little variation between demographic categories
- Men and self-describe more likely than women to use a desktop
- Men and self-describe more likely than women to use additional screens
- Cost of devices: only 9% of students given, loaned or help to buy devices (20% of students with an impairment/learning difference)

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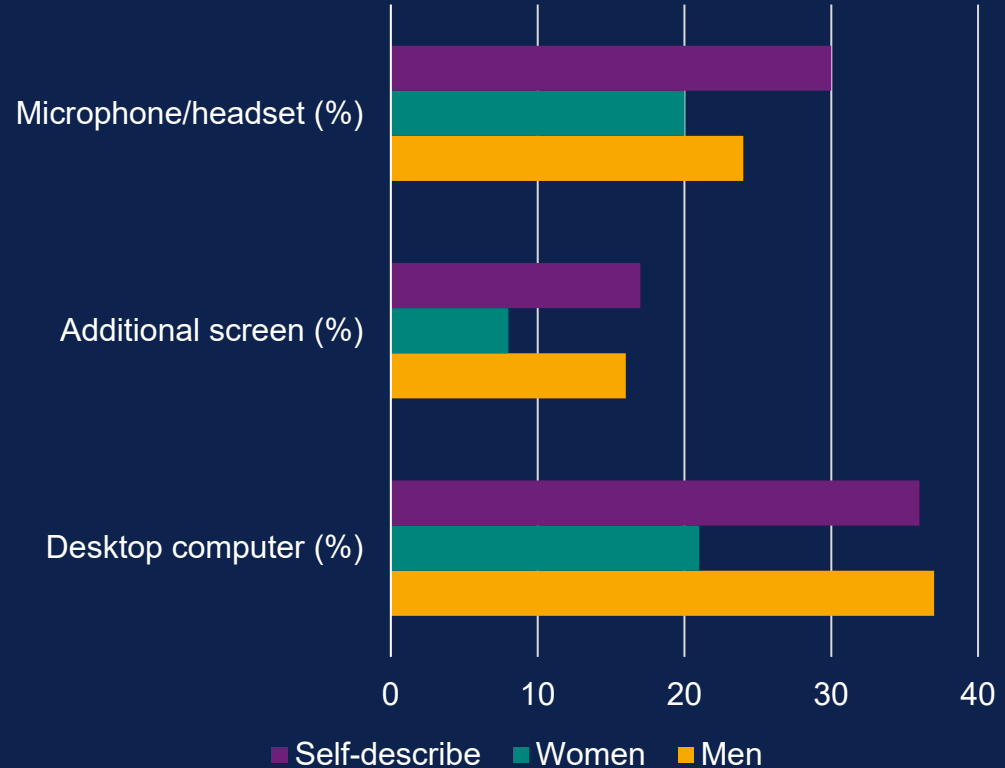
Tools/features that assist learning – 1

Do you use any of these features?

Feature	Percentage
Captions	28%
Spelling/writing support	26%
Screen reader	17%
Transcripts	16%
Dictation	15%
Screen magnification	10%
Alternative/ergonomi…	3%
Other	2%

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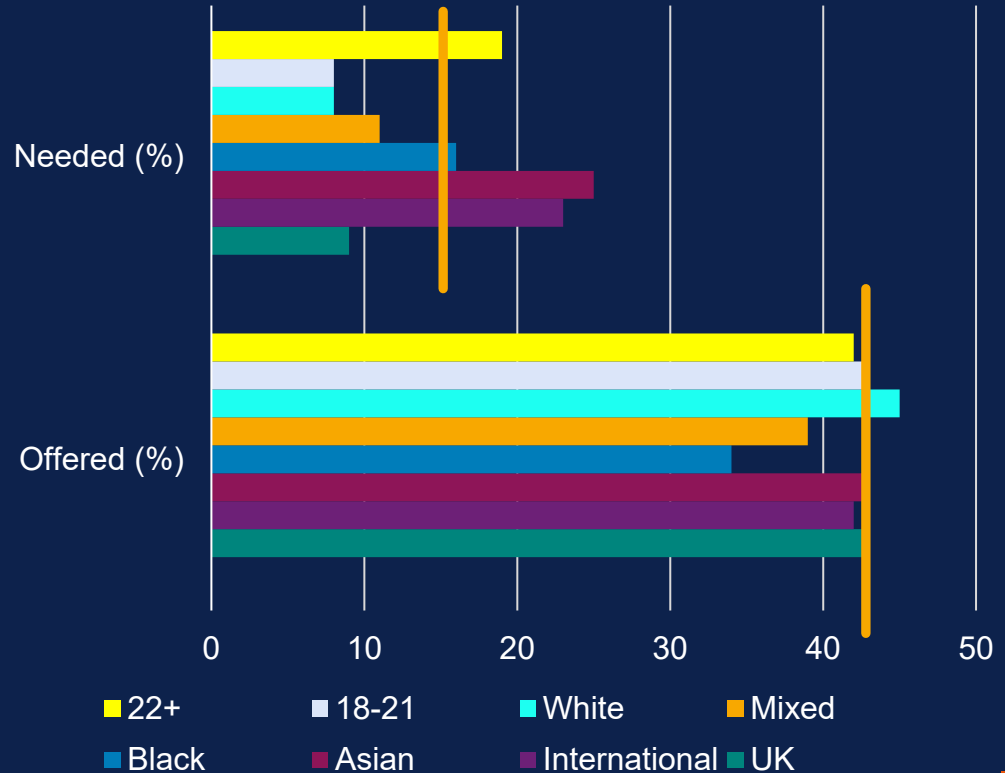
Tools/features that assist learning – 2

- 57% used at least one assistive technology tool, feature or device

- Most students did not require support to use these features (85% no, 15% yes)

- Of those who did require support, less than half (43%) were offered it

- 22+ (19%), Asian (25%) and International (23%) students more likely to need support

- Black students (34%) less likely than White (45%) and Asian (43%) students to be offered it
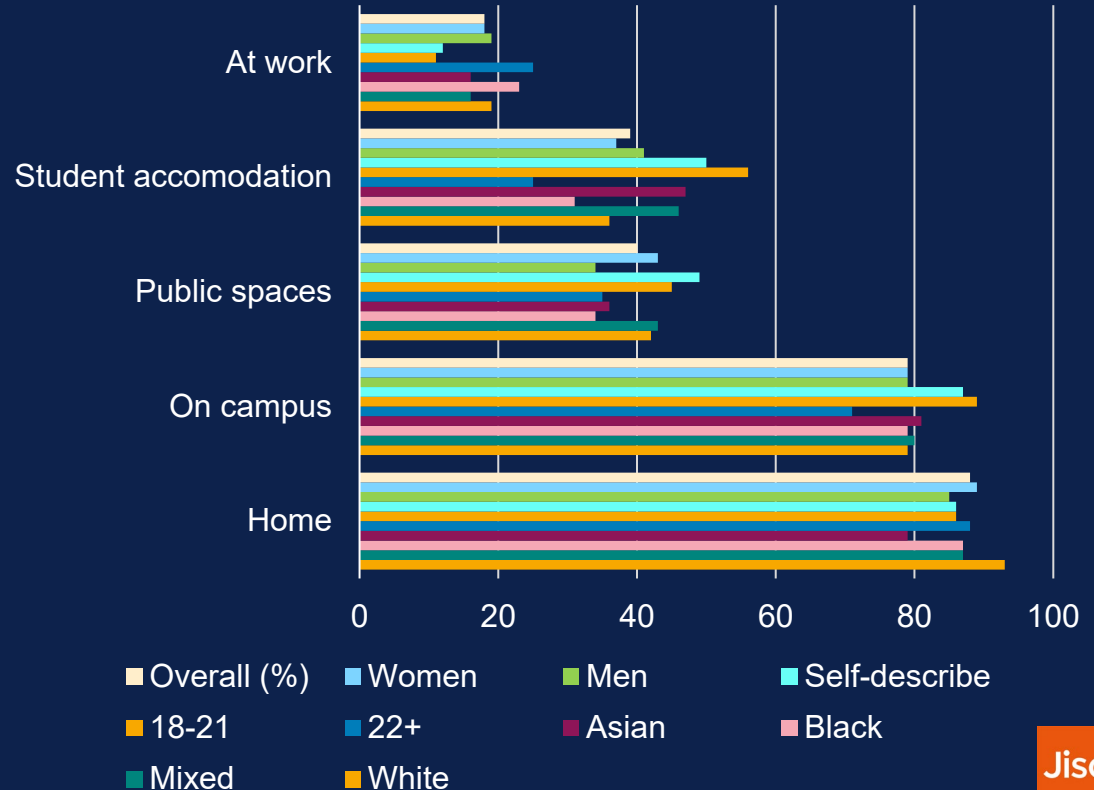

Legend: 22+ (yellow), 18-21 (light blue/grey), White (cyan), Mixed (orange), Black (blue), Asian (magenta), International (purple), UK (teal)

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Quality of online learning environment

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the online learning environment?

Rating	Percentage
Best imaginable	4%
Excellent	29%
Good	48%
Average	14%
Poor	3%
Awful	1%
Worst imaginable	0%

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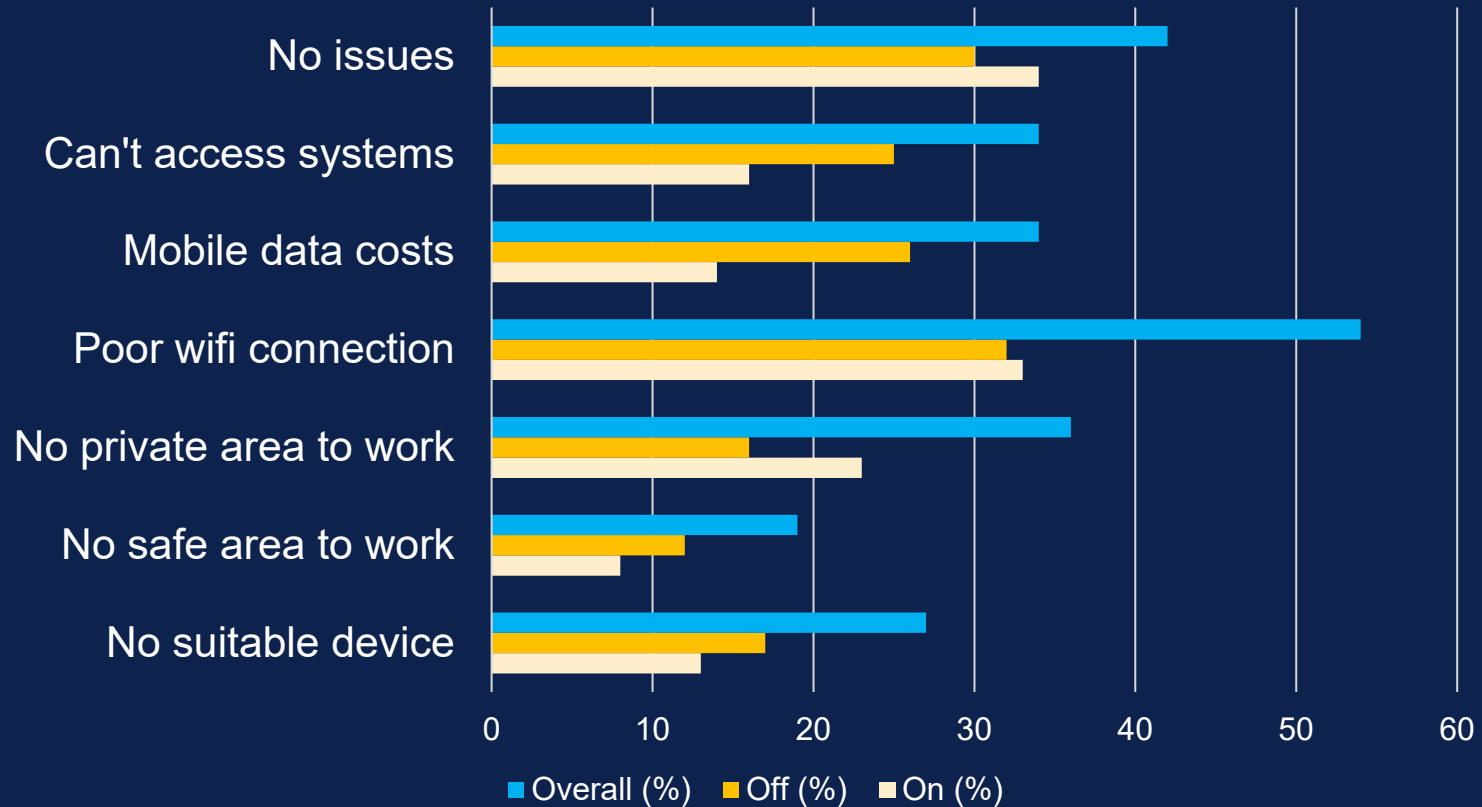
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Location of learning using technology – 1

- Overall, most students worked at home (88%) and/or on campus (79%) when using technology

- A significant number of students worked in public spaces (40%)

- Almost a fifth (18%) learned while at work

- Students 22+ (25%) and Black students (23%) more likely to learn at work

- Public spaces: 18-21 (45%), 22+ (35%)

- Public spaces: women (43%), self-describe (49%), men (34%)

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Problems with digital technologies in learning

	Overall (%)	Off (%)	On (%)
No issues	42	30	34
Can't access systems	34	25	16
Mobile data costs	34	26	14
Poor wifi connection	54	32	33
No private area to work	36	16	23
No safe area to work	19	12	8
No suitable device	27	17	13

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Problems with digital technologies in learning – 2

No suitable device

Mobile data costs

Categories (both charts): Asian, Black, Mixed, White, UK, International

Legend: On campus (%) — Off campus (%)

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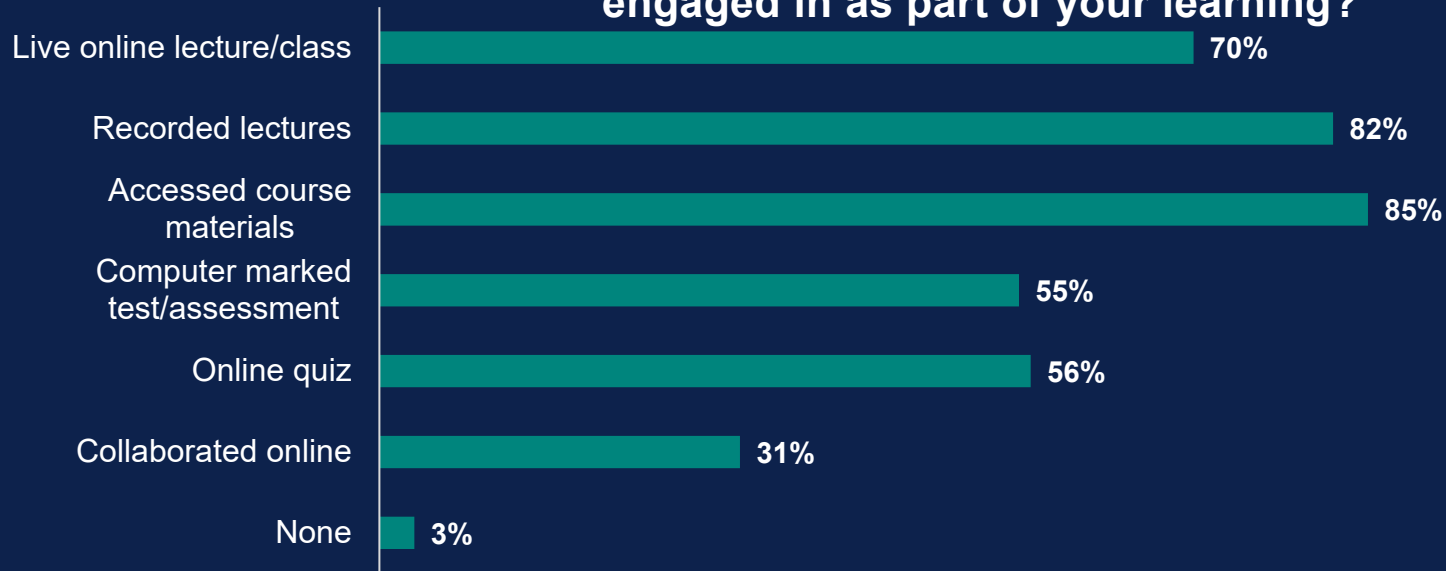Jisc
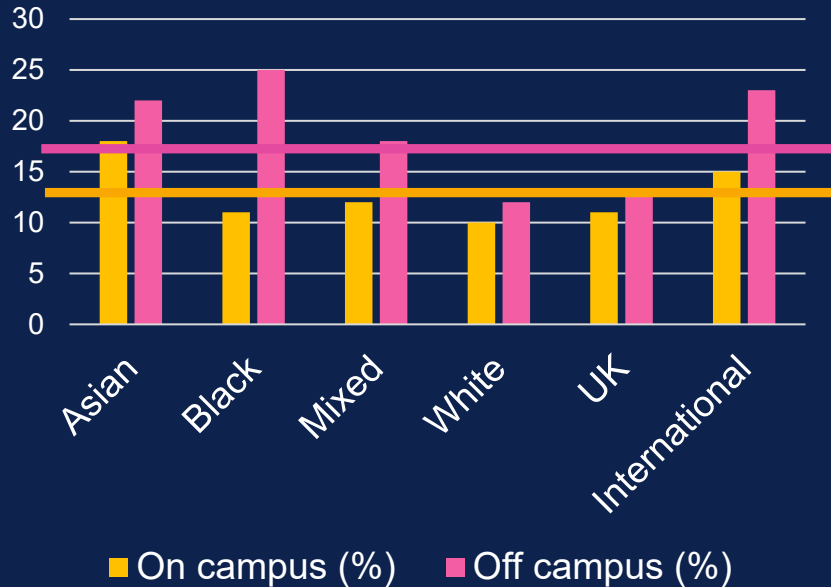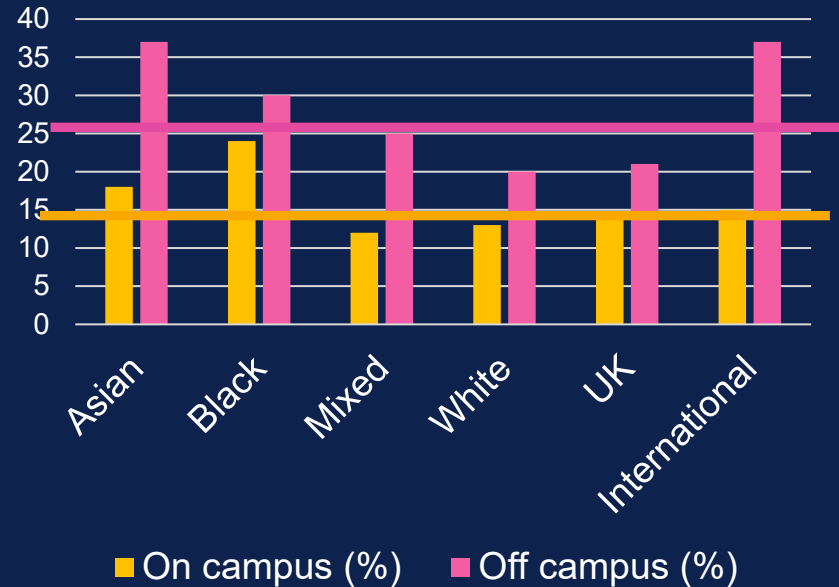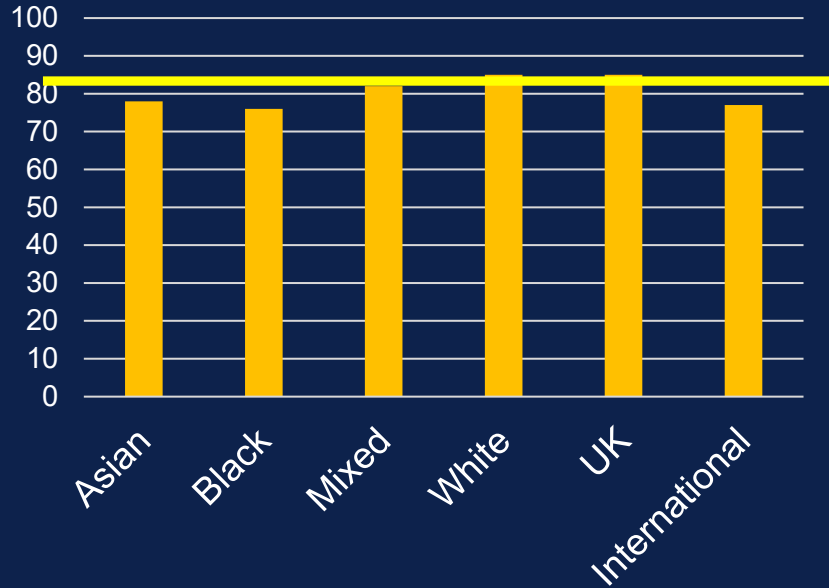
Learning opportunities – 1

In the last academic year, which of these activities have you engaged in as part of your learning?

Activity	Percentage
Live online lecture/class	70%
Recorded lectures	82%
Accessed course materials	85%
Computer marked test/assessment	55%
Online quiz	56%
Collaborated online	31%
None	3%

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Learning opportunities – 2

Recorded lectures

Category	Value
Asian	78
Black	76
Mixed	81
White	83
UK	83
International	77

Accessed course materials

Category	Value
Asian	75
Black	80
Mixed	87
White	91
UK	89
International	77

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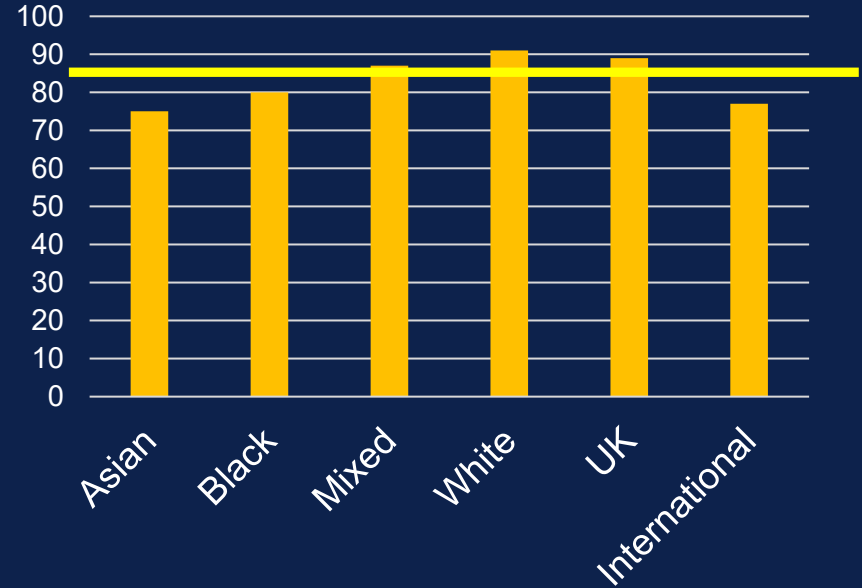
Support for skills/training - 1

Which of these skills have we offered support or training for?

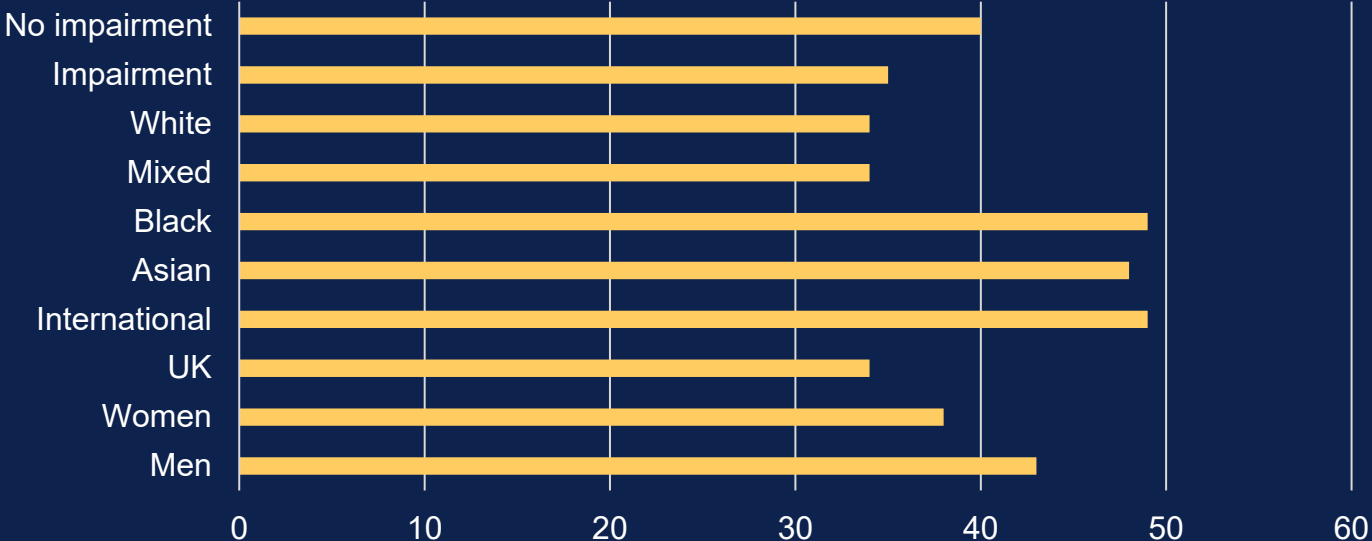| Skill	Percentage
Basic IT skills	36%
Learning online	46%
Specialist software	26%
Data analysis	21%
Coding	14%
Avoiding plagiarism	58%
None	12%

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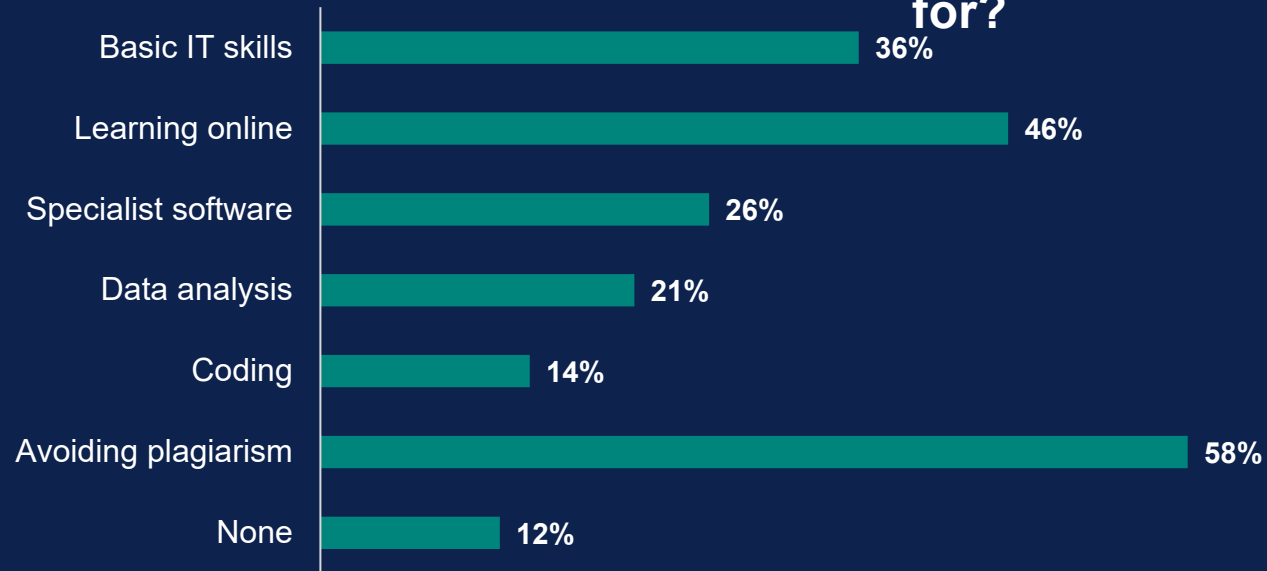
Support for skills/training - 2

Do you agree that you have been given development opportunities to build digital skills for future employment? **(% agreed)**
Overall: 40/% agreed, 40% neutral, 20% disagreed

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Exploring the qualitative data through cost-of-living lens

- Digital poverty/hardship not a topic specifically identified in Python algorithm/topic modelling approach

- A range of issues affecting academic experience and attainment:

    - 55% of students in paid employment
      (HEPI 2023 - sample size = n10,163)

    - 63% of students are working while studying
      (Black Bullion 2024 – sample size = n1,200)

    - 49% of undergraduates missed classes in order to do paid work, 23% missed deadline/requested extension
      (Sutton Trust 2023 – sample size = n2,019)

    - Experiences of commuter and on-campus students differ (Black Bullion 2024 – sample size = n1,200)

    - International students experience digital 'shocks'
      (Jisc 2023 – sample size = n>2,000)

What are your mitigating strategies?

https://bit.ly/DEI-cost-living

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What aspect of learning using digital technologies is most positive for you? (n=5,554 from 27,131)

Top six:

- Access (n=3,743)

- Availability/available (n=689)

- Laptops, devices and equipment (n=328)

- Provision/provide (n=210)

- Free (n=199)

- Cost (n=109)

Plus: general comments linked to cost savings of flexibility learning and how this mitigates against travel and commute costs

"I am able to stay at home and not journey to university (45 mins) everyday as this is not a cost I am able to afford and the train is more expensive still. It means I am able to engage in all the materials whilst saving myself money and helping the environment."

"Most positive element is accessibility - once you are able to afford access to a laptop or alternative device, then you almost feel like you can compete with those around you. Almost. Obviously, this is far from reality and when home there are other obstacles - wifi, lack of privacy and overcrowding etc. Nonetheless, using digital technologies (once you have access) is positive because it levels the playing field more."

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What aspect of learning using digital technologies is most negative for you? (n=3,098 from 27,131)

Top five:

- Access (n=1,164)
- Laptops, devices and equipment (n=684)
- Availability/available (n=460)
- Provision/provide (n=183)
- Cost (n=112)

Plus: general comments linked to wifi, mobile data costs, not having access to industry standard equipment and software – impact on attainment.

"I don't like that there is so much inequality based on what you can afford. Some people will be able to afford excellent laptops, some won't. My laptop recently broke and I didn't feel I could access support from the university, either in terms of academic or financial support, and I was therefore at a disadvantage."

"Financial support was the only area I struggled with. Studying at home can be cold at times due to the cost of living crisis."

"The costs are extortionate when it comes to subscriptions for digital tools mandatory for my degree. These should be free."

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To help you use digital technologies effectively, what ONE thing should we do? (n=1,516 from 27,131 responses)

Buy Promote Advertise Pay Purchase Loan Access Device Fund Free Available Laptop Afford Invest Finance Expensive Provide Equip

These issues were mentioned by 5.58% respondents, confidence in our data suggests we could extrapolate and say that potentially over 160,000 students may be affected (based on HESA 2021/22 data on HE student numbers).

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To make effective use of digital technologies

The ONE thing students feel universities should do

Provide …

- Access to everything they need (software, resources, suitable spaces to work, access to suitable equipment and work-spaces around the clock, data storage – even devices in some cases)

- Information relating to the digital aspects – many do not know what help and support is available, or where to find it

- Advice on what to buy before they arrive to avoid costly purchases of unsuitable devices (specification, suitability for software and subject, compatibility)

- More – loan and finance options, fully equipped spaces suitable for different modes of learning

- Increased/differentiated support and more flexible policies for those with reduced access to campus facilities

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In their own words

"Make sure that everyone has access. I know several people on my course who are having to write essays on their smartphones because they do not have consistent access to a laptop/computer."

"Do not assume that everyone has access to adequate digital technology."

"Extend the loan scheme – a 6-hour loan is not enough for those who don't live close to the campus."

"Tell us what software you offer and how to find it."

"Please help students access the course costs bursary as I only now know about it in my third year."

"Ensure all students have the right hardware to support their learning on campus and elsewhere. More than the loaning service."

"Provide funding for students who can't afford to buy laptops/iPads as technology is an integral part of learning."

"It would be good to have any talks or resources for issues with digital technologies promoted more in classes. It feels like they are tucked away in spam emails or in out of the way points on the student intranet pages."

"Tell students that we have access to free Microsoft office and other apps via uni, I paid lots of money for 3 years before anyone told me."

"Loan out laptops to students who either don't have one, are sharing or the one that they have is inadequate."

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Mitigating strategies

- Clarify digital offer and expectations (how technology will be used, hardware needed (inc. specification), software, reference and study materials, peripheral devices)

- Better promote financial support, loans and bursaries

- Ensure students know what software is freely available and how to access it

- Ensure loan schemes align with study needs (duration, on/off campus, specification)

- Offer a range of funding options and advice

- Enhance onsite access (extended times, specialist software/labs)

- Consider the digital estate and suitability for today's study needs

- Don't assume – design for an equitable experience and offer alternative activities and assessment options

- Use your data to understand the situation in your organistion

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Additional questions in 2023/24 surveys

Surveys still live … student surveys close 26 April

Please tell us whether any of the following issues linked to the rising cost of living/affordability have influenced how and where you study:

- Travel related costs that have kept you away from campus facilities

- Making more use of campus facilities to minimise personal costs (such as equipment and devices, heating, lighting, connectivity etc)

- Taking on paid work/more work to mitigate cost of living expenses which may sometimes conflict with your ability to study

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References and links

- Digital experience insights website: digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk

- 2022/23 reports on digital experiences: https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/reports-and-briefings/

- HEPI: https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Student-Academic-Experience-Survey-2023.pdf

- Sutton Trust: https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/new-polling-on-the-impact-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis-on-students/

- Black Bullion: https://business.blackbullion.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Student-Money-Wellbeing-2024-Blackbullion.pdf

- Jisc research on digital experiences of international students
  - Phase 1: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/international-students-digital-experience-a-review-of-policy-academic-literature-and-views-from-uk-he
  - Phase 2: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/international-students-digital-experience-phase-two-experiences-and-expectations

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Any questions?

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Get in touch …

Digital experience insights
digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk

help@jisc.ac.uk

Dominic Walker
Business intelligence
consultant
dominic.walker@jisc.ac.uk

Clare Killen
Senior consultant, business
intelligence
clare.killen@jisc.ac.uk