

Sustainability perceptions

Understanding student and staff perceptions of
sustainability at Manchester Metropolitan University

March 2024



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About the report

This report presents key findings from surveying activities into student and staff perceptions of sustainability, and the extent to which skills and knowledge have been gained from the curriculum or as part of the University's professional development offering.

In November 2022 Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met) launched its Leadership in Sustainability Strategy (2022-2026) which sets out the University's ambition to be a beacon of sustainable development practice – through our education, research, partnerships, and campus. In working to deliver our ambition, the strategy sets out four long-term goals to 2030, underpinned by more detailed priorities to 2026/27.

Contact us

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Student perceptions

As part of the student enrolment survey the University ask all students questions related to sustainability and travel to gain insight into how students perceive the university, if sustainability related learning is occurring in the curriculum, and expected travel behaviours whilst studying at Manchester Met.

About the Manchester Met student enrolment survey

All students (including new and returning students) are required to complete an annual enrolment survey before they commence or resume their studies. As part of the survey, students are required to answer two questions relating to sustainability, which provide valuable insight into perceptions and sustainability learning experiences.

Manchester Met have tracked students responses on these issues since 2014. The information helps track and monitor our progress towards key strategic commitments and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to sustainability, particularly Education of Sustainable Development (ESD). Typically, >32,000 students complete the annual enrolment survey.

Education for Sustainable Development

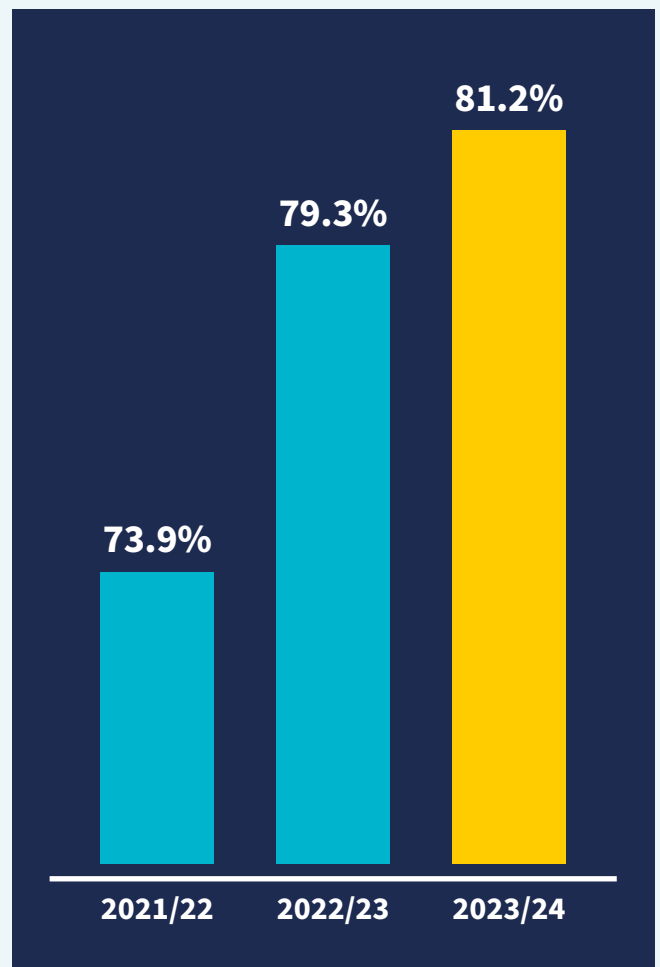
Returning students are asked if their course provides opportunities to gain knowledge and skills relating to sustainable development. Responses from returning student (as opposed to new students) are measured as this group are able to reflect on whether they gain Sustainable Development (SD) skills and knowledge as part of their course at Manchester Met.

The proportion of returning students who respond that they are gaining sustainability skills is increasing each year. Most recently, 81.2%¹ (2023/24) of returning students indicated they are satisfied they have opportunities to gain SD skills and knowledge as part of their course.

This could be attributed to a strategic and active focus on embedding ESD into the curriculum, driven by a commitment to embed ESD and climate change education in all courses by 2026/27 as part of the University's Leadership in Sustainability Strategy 2022-26.

Acknowledgement should be given to fact that Manchester Met students have been canvassed on this issue since 2015/16, however, prior to 2021/22 the enrolment question focussed on environmental sustainability rather than sustainable development, and on SD skills and knowledge gained as a result of a student's whole university experience (including informal, formal, and subliminal curriculum), rather than their experience as part of their course. Therefore, survey responses prior to 21/22 are not comparable with current enrolment data and are not included in this report.

Students satisfied they are gaining skills and knowledge through their course:



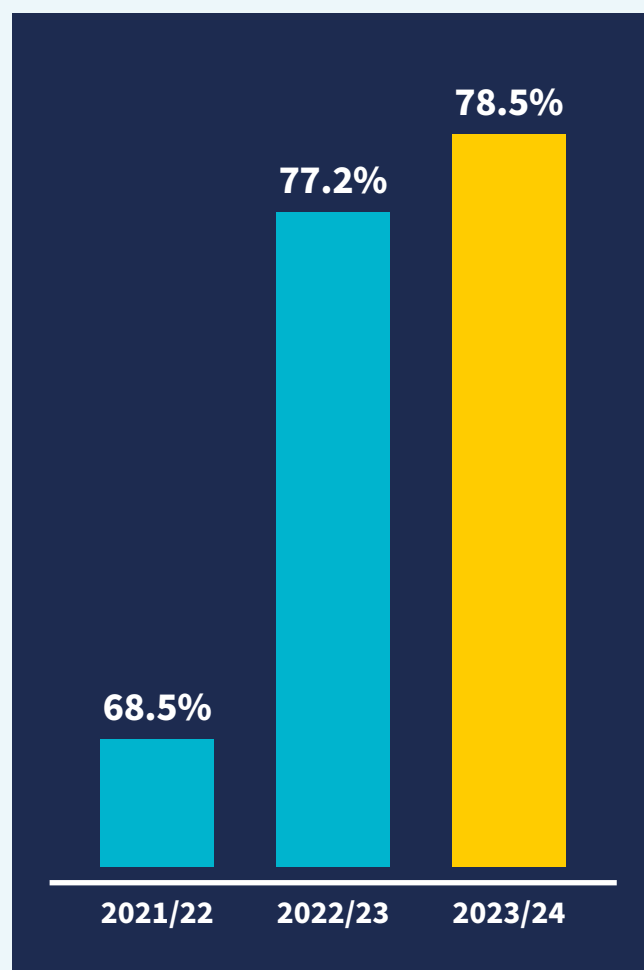
¹ Data source: 2023/24 enrolments, returning students selecting 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

Perception of Manchester Met as a sustainable University

Understanding whether students perceive Manchester Met to be committed to sustainable development is important as it provides an indication of experiences and perceptions whilst studying at the university. Mostly recently, 78.3% of students² (2023/24) perceived that Manchester Met is committed to SD across its broad ranges of activities, a figure that has increased each year since 2021/22.

The extent to which students agree and strongly agree that Manchester Mer is committed to sustainable development may be a combination of what they experience whilst studying and socialising at the university and living in student accommodation. Furthermore, it is likely that as the University improves its sustainability performance and is recognised in national and international sustainability rankings, for example Manchester Met have retained a top three position in the People and Planet University League since 2013 and is a global top 5% University in the Time Higher Education Impact Rankings, so too does student perception that the organisation is committed to sustainable development.

Student perception of Manchester Met as a sustainable university:



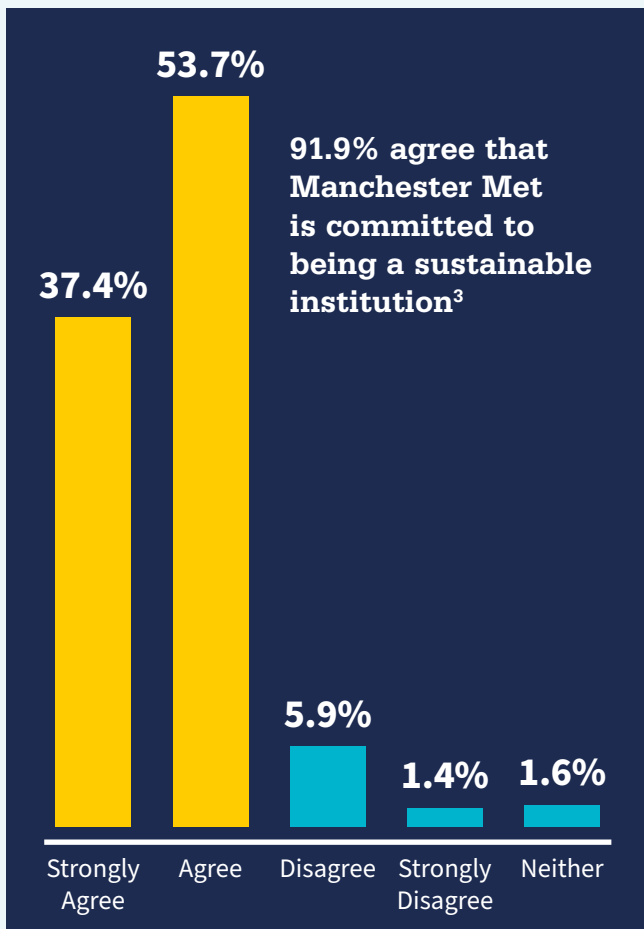
² Data source: 2023/24 enrolments, all students selecting 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

Staff perceptions

Manchester Met employees are asked a series of questions relating to sustainability as part of its biennial travel and sustainability survey. In 2023 a survey was undertaken which sought to gain insight into staff perceptions of sustainable development, as opposed to environmental sustainability at the university. Therefore, some the survey findings from the 2023 survey are not directly comparable with the previous surveys.

The following sections summarise findings from five questions asked as part of the 2023 employee travel and sustainability survey.

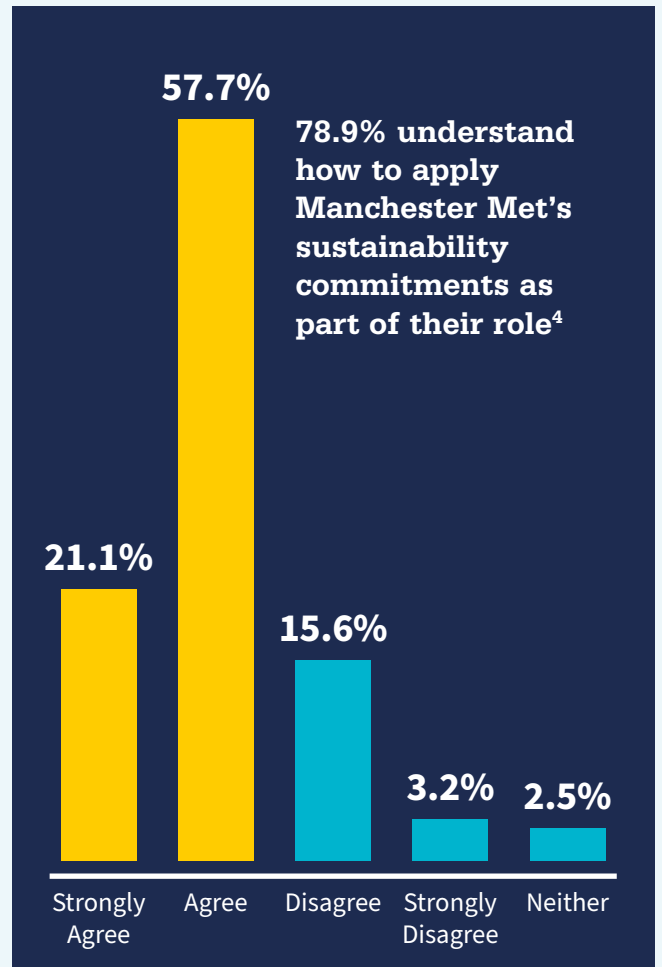
Perception that Manchester Met is committed to being a sustainable institution:



3 Staff selecting 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

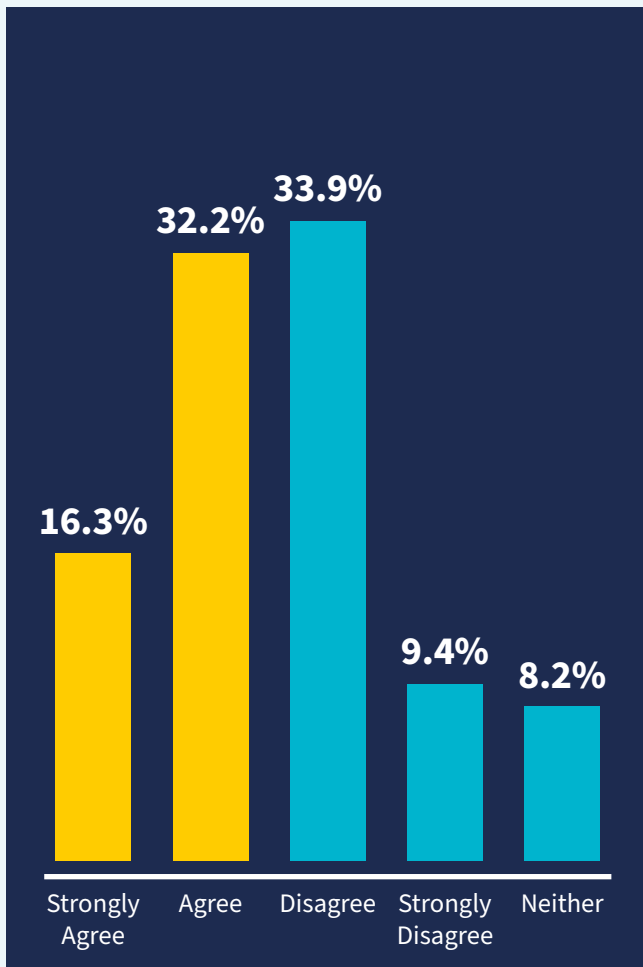
4 Staff selecting 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

Understanding of Manchester Met's sustainability commitments and how to apply as part of role:



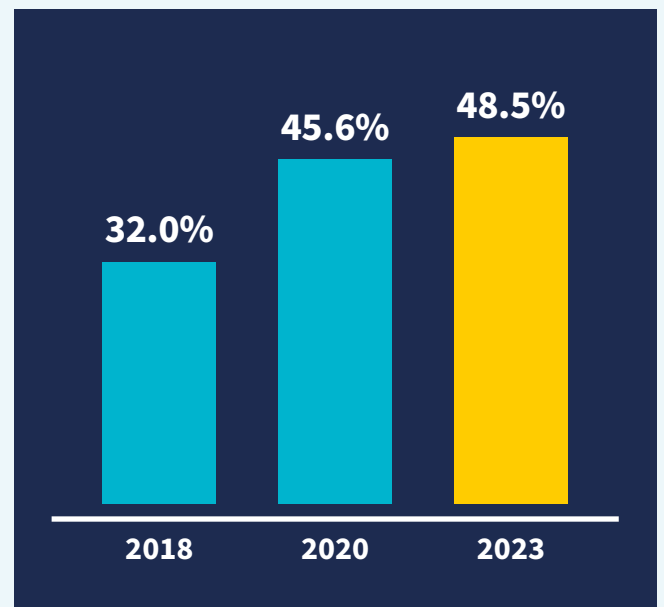
Staff perceptions

Sustainable development related professional development opportunities undertaken:



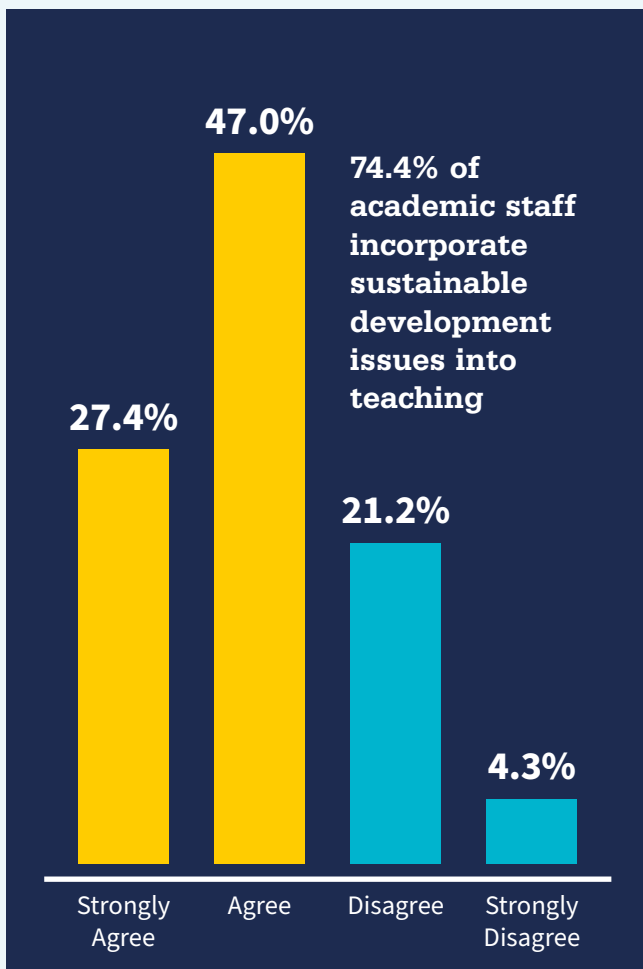
Just under half (48.5%) of respondents in the 2023 employee travel and sustainability survey stated that they have undertaken professional development opportunities related to sustainable development. Although there is still some way to go in engaging staff in professional development opportunities related to sustainability, since 2018 the survey findings indicate a gradual increase in the proportion of staff undertaking relevant training activities.

Agree and strongly agree responses:



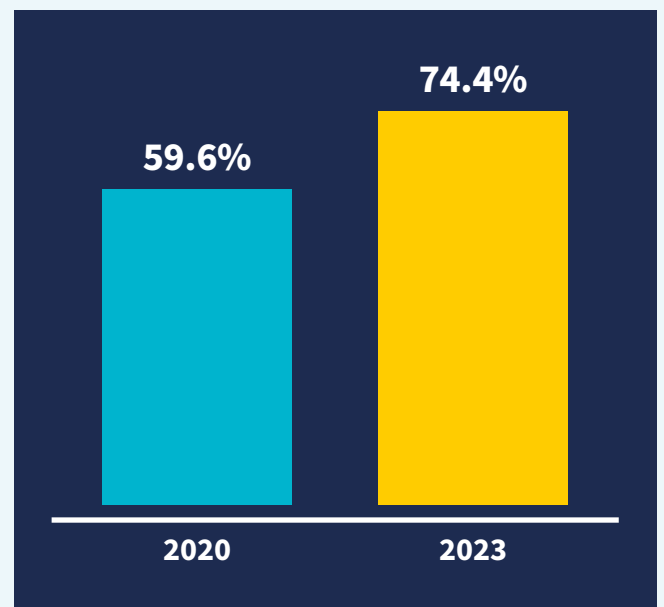
Staff perceptions

Incorporating sustainable development into teaching:



Academic staff were asked whether they incorporate sustainable development into their teaching. Of the academic members of staff responding to the survey, 74.4% agreed or strongly agreed that they incorporate SD issues into their teaching. In the previous survey, academic staff were asked specifically about environmental sustainability, so although not directly comparable, an increase from 59.6% selecting agree or strongly agree in 2020, to 74.4% in 2023 is encouraging and likely a result of training and development activities undertaken that relate to Manchester Met's strategic commitment to embed ESD and climate change education in all courses by 2026/27.

Agree and strongly agree responses:

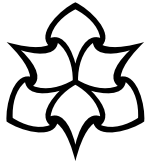


Summary of perceptions

Staff and student perceptions of Manchester Met as a university committed to sustainability are high, with over 91% of staff and nearly 80% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing this is the case. This is a useful indicator that the university is genuinely perceived as taking steps to embed sustainable development across our broad range of educational, research and campus activities.

The survey findings show that ESD and climate education are embedded into courses to a greater extent than in previous years. More returning students (81.2% in 2023/24) rate that they are gaining SD knowledge and skills as part of their taught course, and more academics (74.4% in 2023) rate that they have embedded relevant SD topics into their taught courses and units. Such increases are likely a direct result of major curriculum projects to embed ESD and climate change education in all courses, including Teach Carbon Literacy (CL) which launched in the summer of 2022, and embedding ESD and CL in Quality Assurance processes which launched in 2023. Another major curriculum project is underway to develop capacity building to embed ESD in all programmes.





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