

Student Association Evaluation 2011

Research findings February 2011

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Background, Objectives & Methodology

- The GCU Students' Association is constantly aiming to optimise the service they deliver to students
- As part of this, research was carried out in Jan 2011 to establish the following:
 - Awareness of the Students' Association and it's offering
 - Engagement with Students' Association activities
 - Effectiveness of Students' Association Communications
 - Improvements for moving forward
- The research follows on from a similar study carried out in Jan 2010 – comparisons are made where appropriate
- An online survey was undertaken with a random sample of 871 students
 - Proportion of total students: 5%
 - This gives a confidence interval of +/- 3.32% at the 95% confidence level

Sample profile

Gender	Sample	GCU
Male	32%	42%
Female	68%	58%

Mature*	Sample	GCU
Yes	48%	N/A
No	52%	N/A

Status	Sample	GCU
Full-time	89%	73%
Part-time	11%	27%

School	Sample	GCU
BNE	6%	9%
CBS	26%	30%
E&C	14%	13%
L&SS	11%	8%
LS	15%	12%
Health	27%	29%
Cal Acad.	1%	0%

Level of study	Sample	GCU
Level 1	21%	24%
Level 2	20%	21%
Level 3	25%	23%
Level 4	17%	15%
Post Graduate	17%	17%

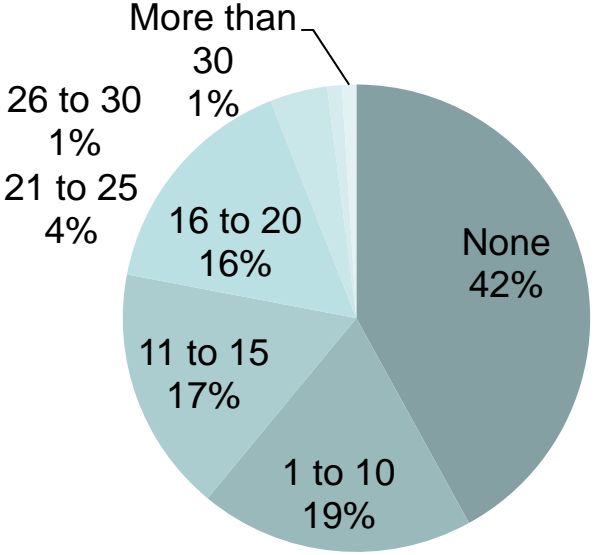
Nationality	Sample	GCU
Domestic	77%	84%
EU	12%	4%
Outside EU	12%	12%

* Defined as over 21 at start of course

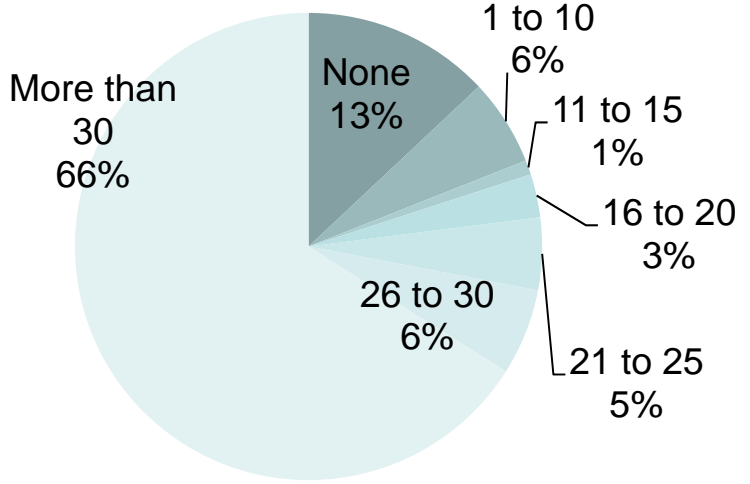
- The sample reflects the wider student profile well with regards to school and level of study
- The sample is somewhat over-representative of full-time students & females, as well as EU students; whilst, domestic students are slightly under-represented

Involvement in any charity or volunteering roles outside of the SA	Yes	21%
	No	79%

No. of hours of paid employment (exc. placements) in an average university week (Full Time students only)

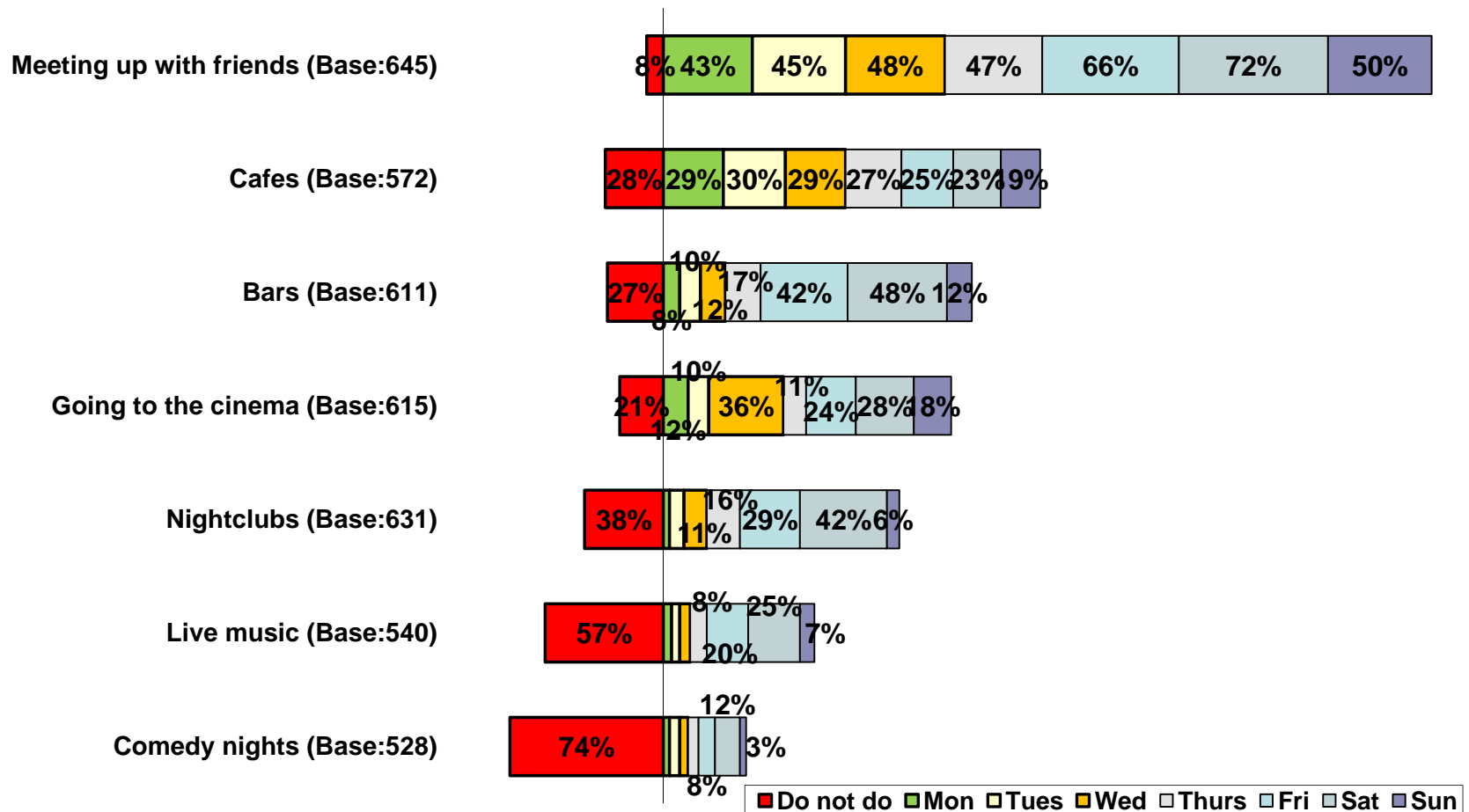


No. of hours of paid employment (exc. placements) in an average university week (Part Time students only)



- Around one-fifth involved in charity/volunteering outside of the SA – ranging from local charities (e.g. for young people) to national & international organisations
- Over half (58%) of FT students are working – most split more or less evenly between 1 to 20 hours
- Two thirds of PT students are working full time with around one tenth (13%) not working at all

Activities undertaken in a typical week

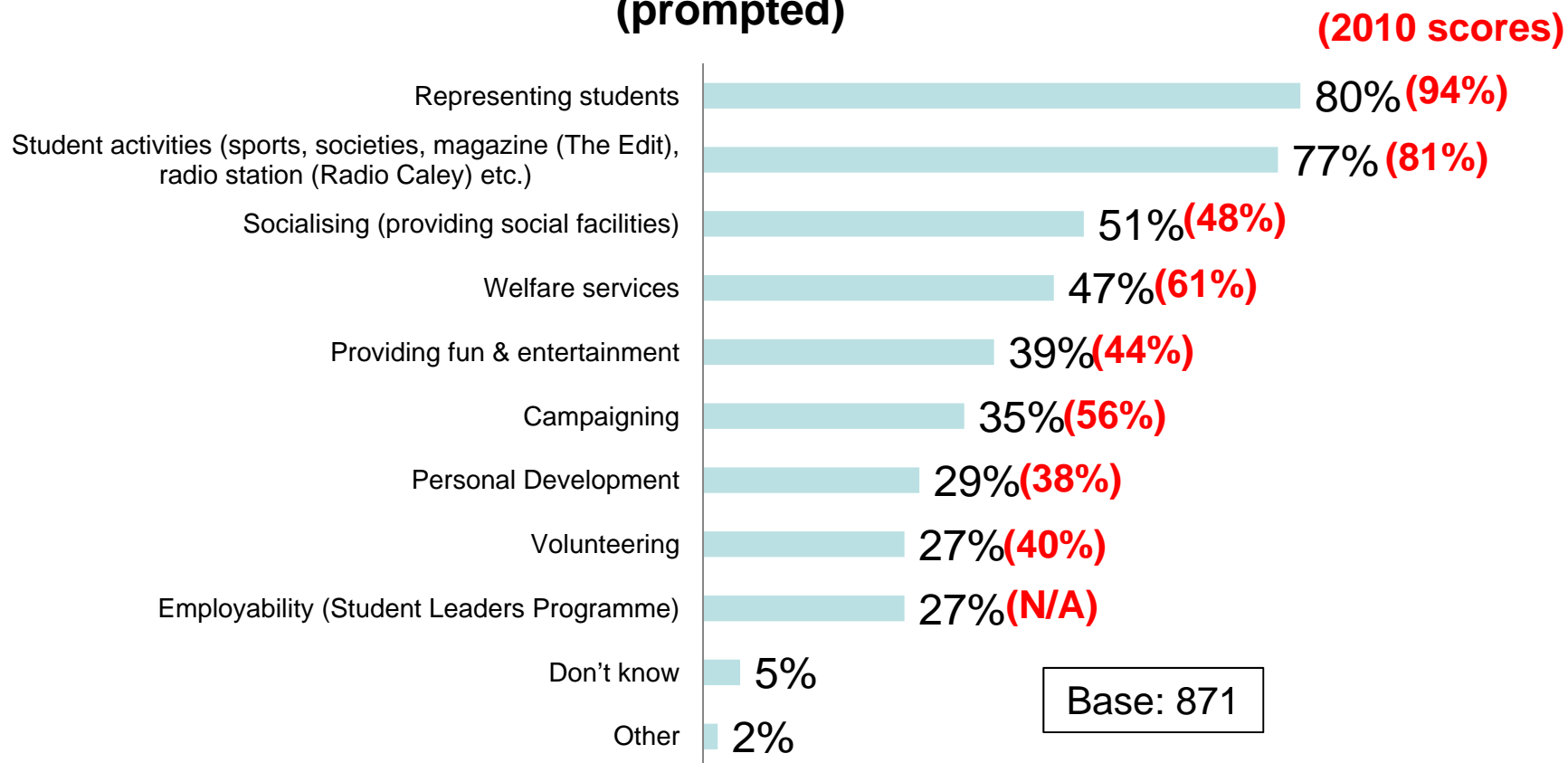


- Unsurprisingly, meeting up with friends is the most undertaken activity, right across the week; followed by going to cafes
- Bars the next common, however mainly on Fridays and Saturdays (naturally the most common nights for nightclubs and live music also)
- The cinema is popular at the weekend, however, Wednesdays are most popular – Orange Wednesdays?

Key findings

Purpose of the Students' Association

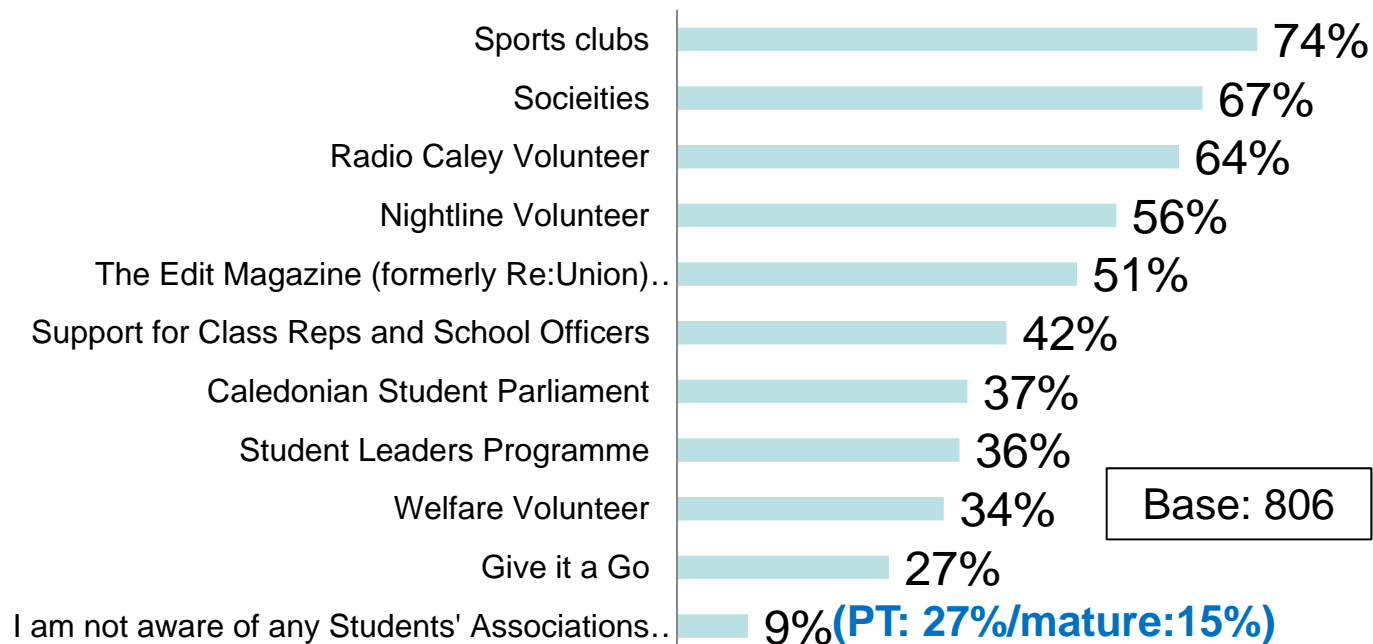
Perceived purposes of the Students' Association (prompted)



- Similar to 2010, awareness of the SA's purpose varies
- Awareness of representing students is high (although this has fallen slightly since 2010) as is student activities – are these promoted more?
- Perception of SA offering the rest – particularly campaigning, employability and personal development (inc. volunteering) – not as high as it could be

Students' Association activities

Awareness of Students' Association activities (prompted)



- Awareness of sports clubs & societies relatively high, as is facilitating students to be volunteers for Radio Caley
- In relation to Nightline and the Edit Magazine volunteering, awareness is slightly lower
- Caledonian Student Parliament – should awareness be greater, given that their decisions affect all students?
- Given the somewhat 'niche' status of the remaining aspects, awareness is acceptable (perhaps exc. 'Give it a Go'), however, there may be room for improvement
- Awareness of any activities is lower amongst part-time and mature students

- Some comments were offered suggesting greater promotion of activities would be welcome by some

CSP not well advertised and awareness is very low

I am a London based post graduate halfway through a ProfDoc course therefore am only occasionally on campus - hence my lack of knowledge regarding these activities

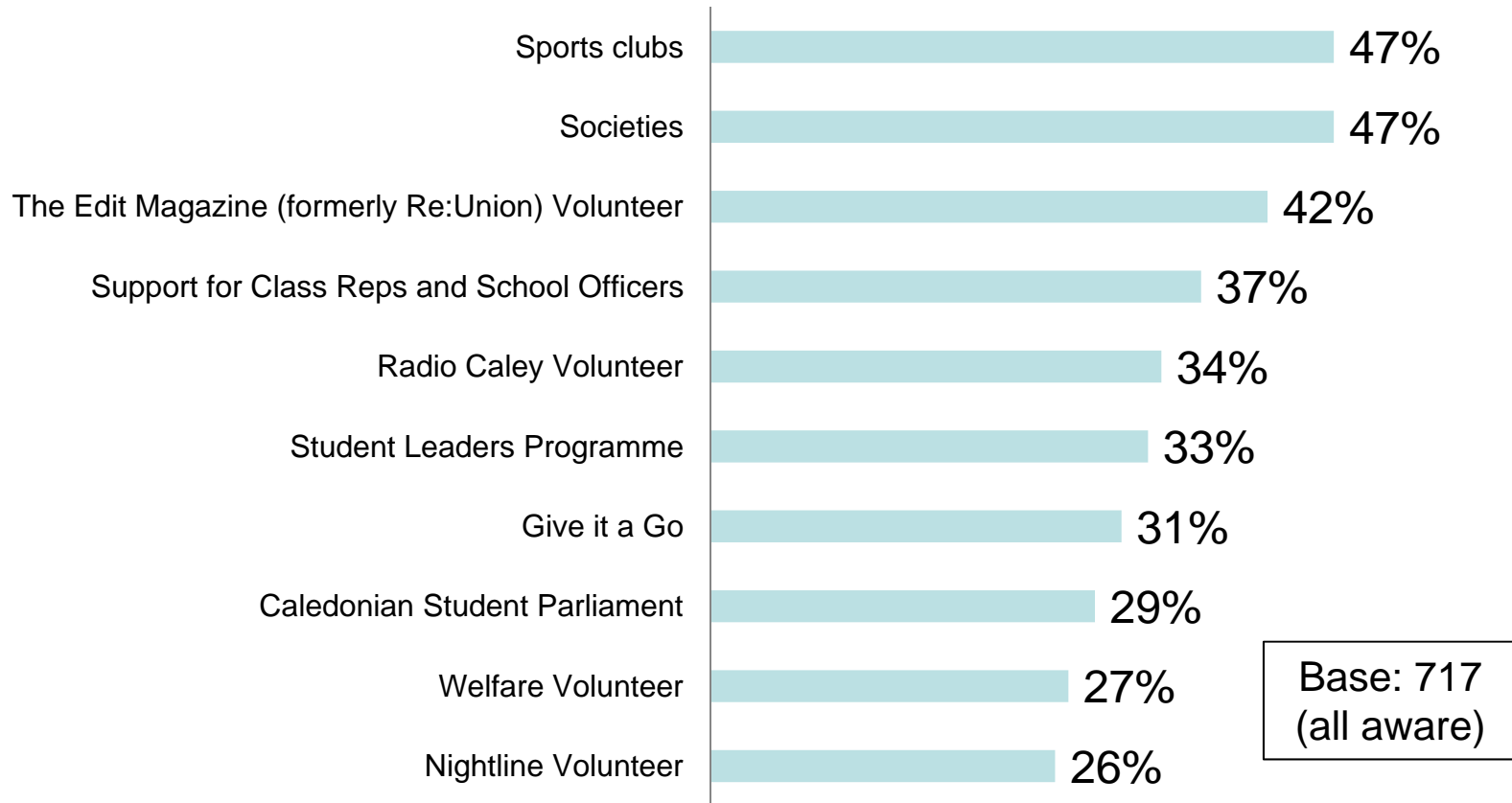
I am not sure how the student parliament represent current students because I've never had any form of communication from them or any involvement with them

The societies and organisations should be given even more highlighting than they are, as I feel that they could be of enormous benefit to the younger students in developing better social and networking skills, as well as preparing them for the working world

I feel like I've never really been encouraged to want to use any of these. I know some exist but never heard anyone talk about them nor say how good it was therefore don't take an interest. If some encouraged me to give it ago or made it sound fun or exciting then maybe it would be a different story

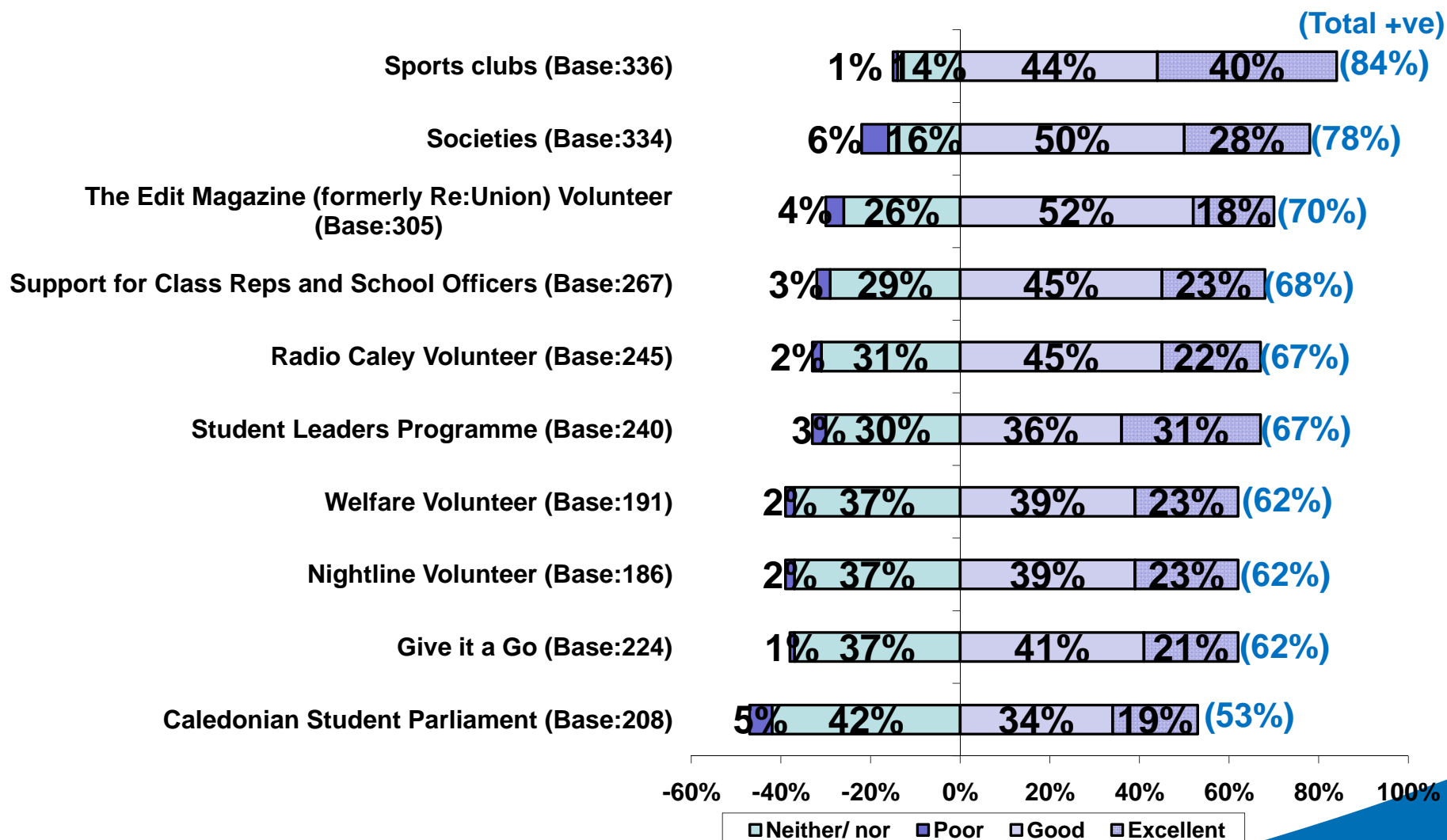
Students' Association activities

Usage of Students' Association activities (prompted)



- Amongst those aware, usage of the SA's activities varies
- Almost half (47%) have experienced the SA's sports clubs and societies – is this surprising?
- Overall, usage appears relatively positive

Students' Association activities – rating



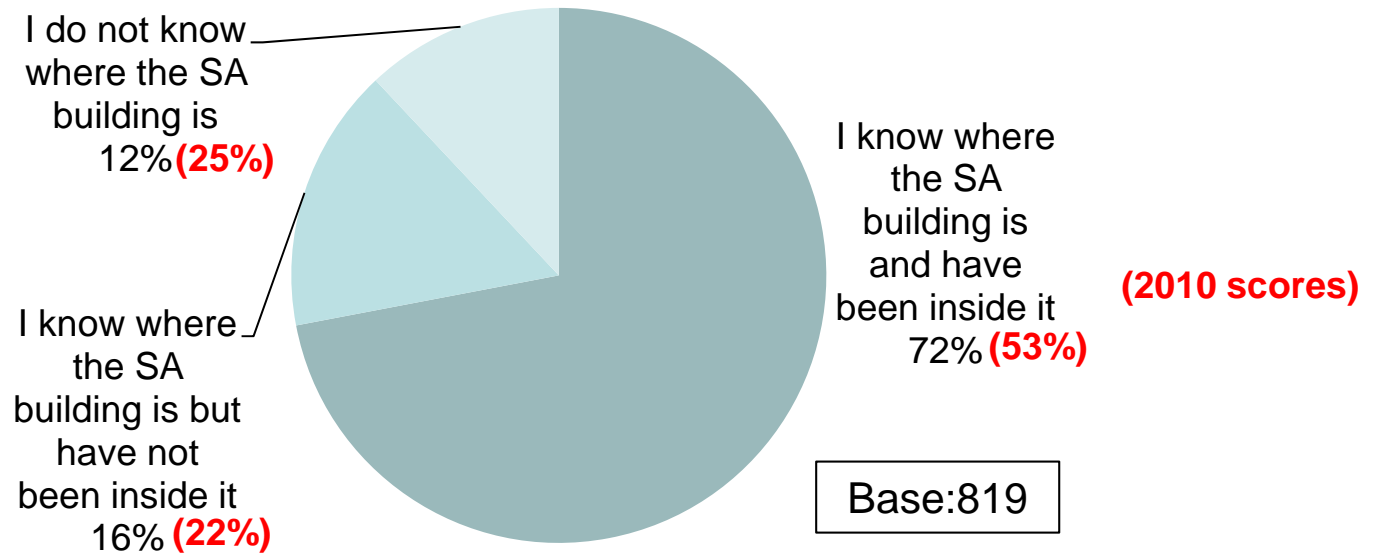
- Sports clubs and societies well received
- The rest are relatively positive, with very little negative opinion, however could we aspire to improve scores (particularly for example, with the Caledonian Student Parliament)? Or better manage expectations?

Potential future Students' Association activities

- Suggested activities and services for further discussion revolved around the following:
 - Sport/activities
 - Cycling club; Kendo; Dance, Glee and music clubs; drama and theatre clubs; badminton; sailing clubs; Golf clubs; meditation & yoga; girl's rugby; scuba diving; debating societies
 - Single online source point for GCU clothing and merchandise
 - Book exchange; dress making & sewing classes
 - Political
 - More involvement in politics and political campaigns
 - Greater support of student protest movement
 - Greater encouragement of charity work
 - Social
 - Bar on campus
 - Quizzes and competitions (perhaps across schools & programmes)
 - 'Fun nights' – cooking/talent shows; random events – go-karting; paintballing; bowling
 - Trips abroad or around the UK
 - Inclusion & involvement
 - More for international and part-time students
 - More assistance for mature students (also highlighted in New2GCU results)

The Students' Association building

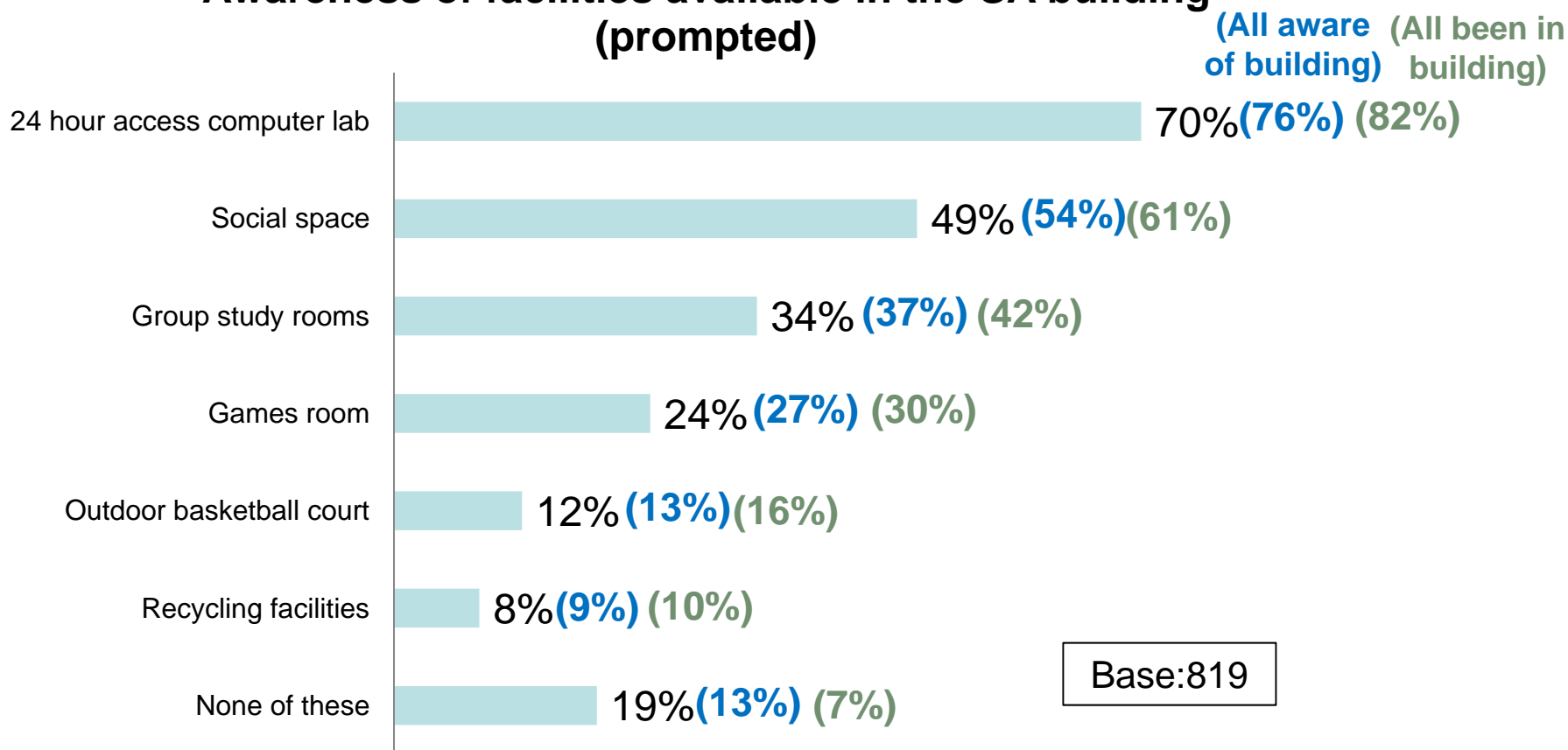
Awareness & usage of the Students' Association building (prompted)



- A positive shift...
 - 2010 – 75% aware; 53% entered the building
 - 2011 – 88% aware; 72% entered the building

The Students' Association building

Awareness of facilities available in the SA building (prompted)



- Around one-fifth (19%) are not aware of any; nor are 13% of those aware of the building; and 7% of those who have been in the building
- Whilst awareness of the 24 hour computer lab is reasonably prominent, awareness of the rest could be higher, even amongst those who are aware of and/or have been in the building – there is a requirement for promotion of these facilities
- Awareness of any activity is also considerably lower amongst part-time students (53%) than full time students (84%)

- Students comments endorsed the need for greater awareness of some facilities...

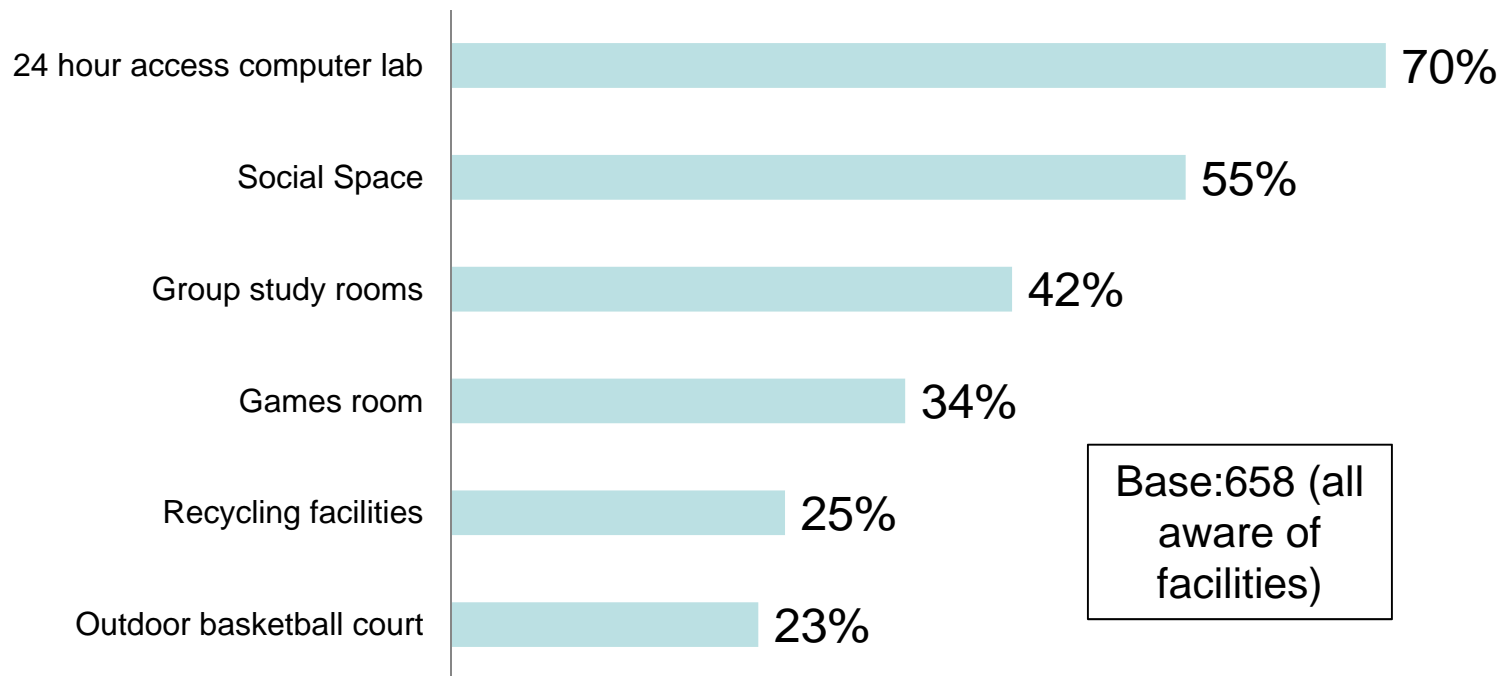
I've worked in the SA and didn't know about the recycling facilities until this questionnaire!

Recycling is quite new I believe and think it should be promoted more as it is very important!

I had no idea the students association had a group study room, out door basketball court or recycling facilities!!!!

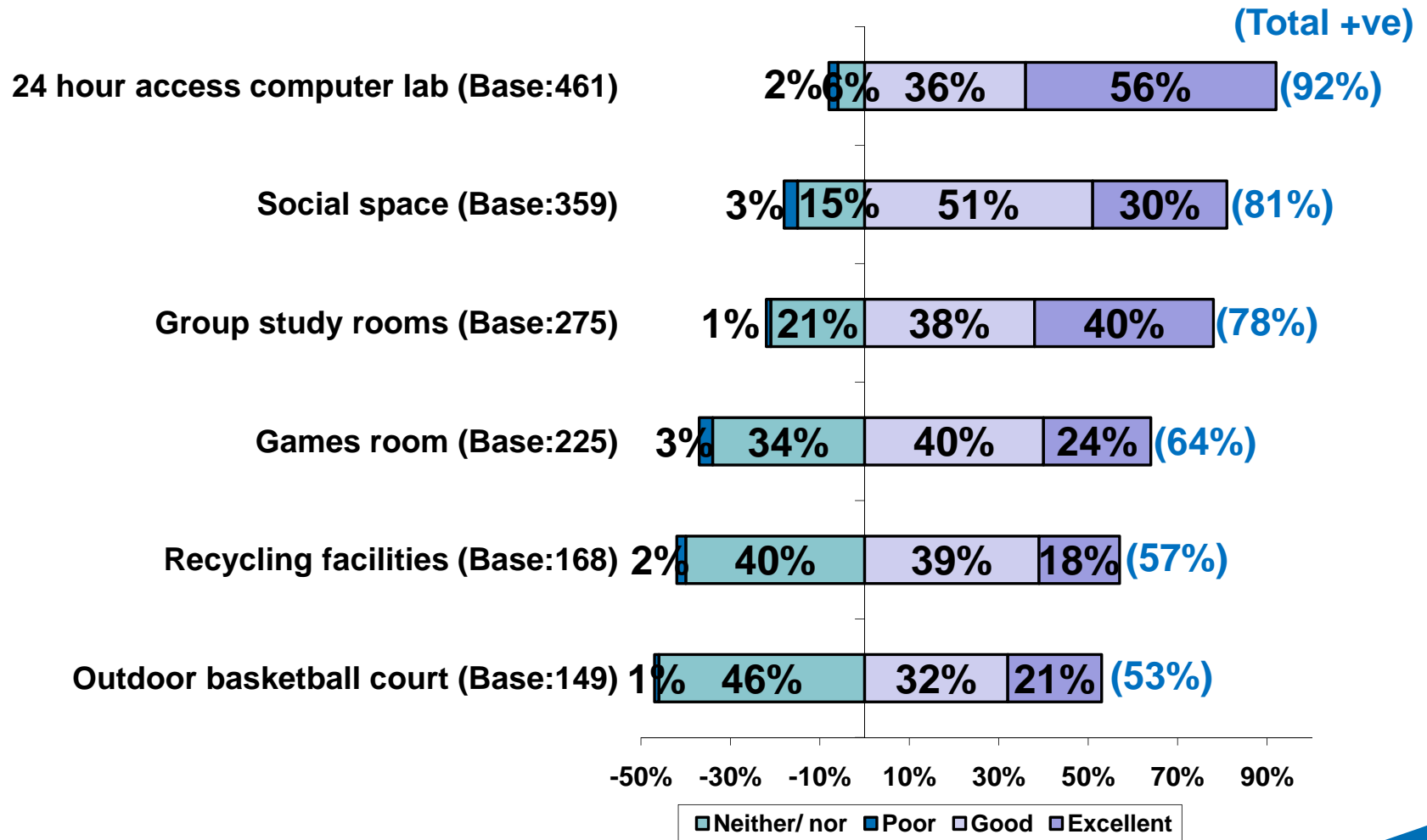
The Students' Association building

Usage of facilities available in the SA building (prompted)



- Use of the computer lab is positive (70% of those aware of its existence)
- Given the 'niche' status of the remaining aspects, then usage is relatively good

The Students' Association building – ratings

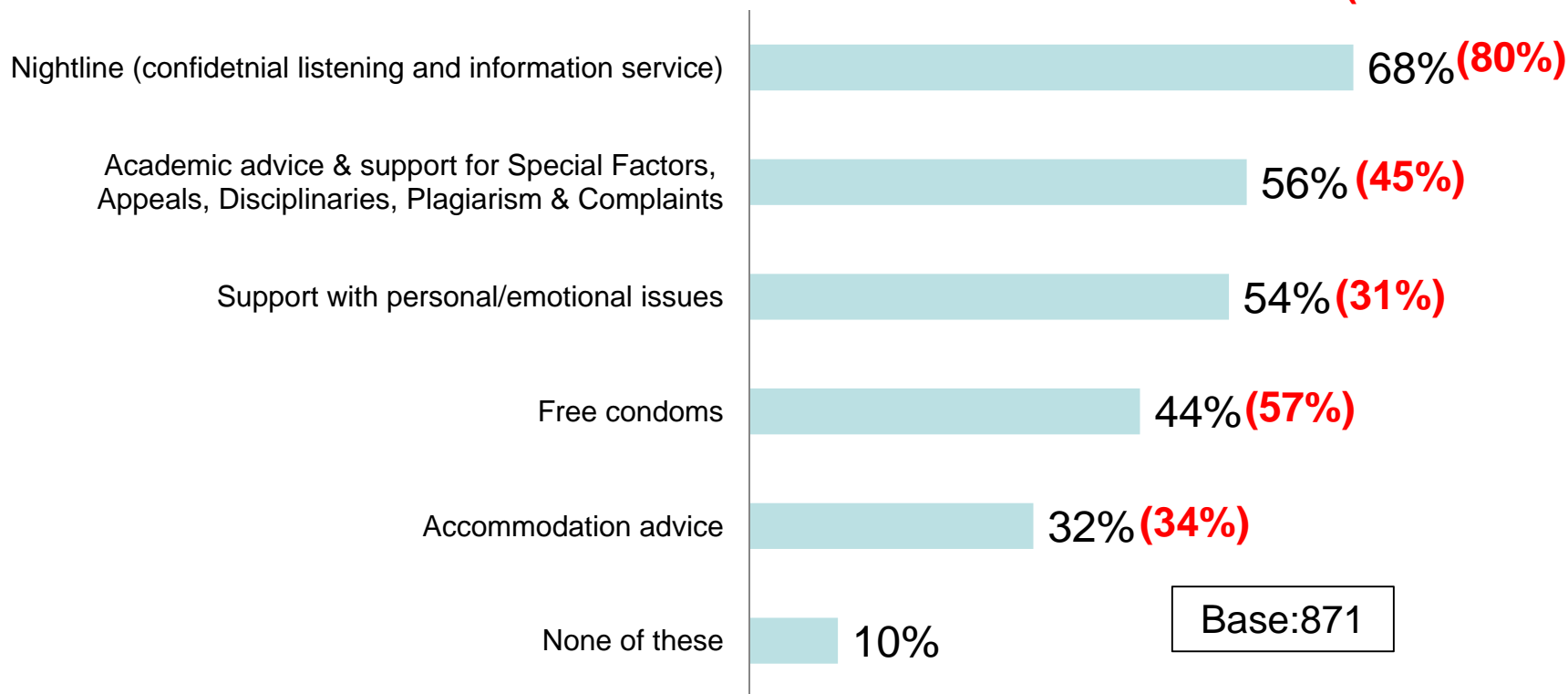


- Opinions of the 24 hour access computer lab and Social space are excellent (92% & 81% respectively); as are Group study rooms (78%)
- Minimal negative comments, however could we aspire to boost opinions of the games room? Perhaps investigate the scope for improving the recycling facilities and basketball court

The Students' Association Welfare Department

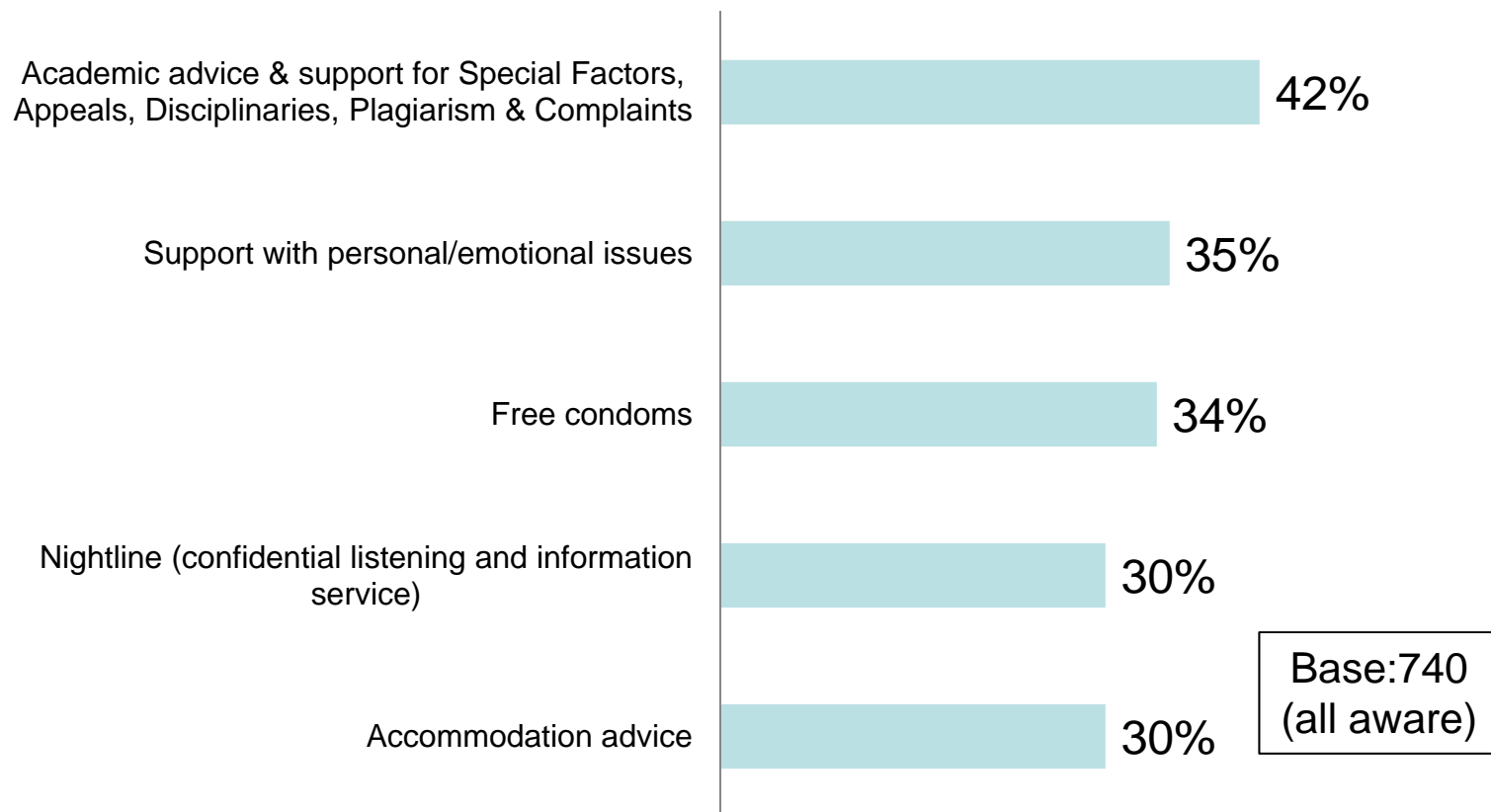
Awareness of SA Welfare Dept. services (prompted)

(2010 scores)



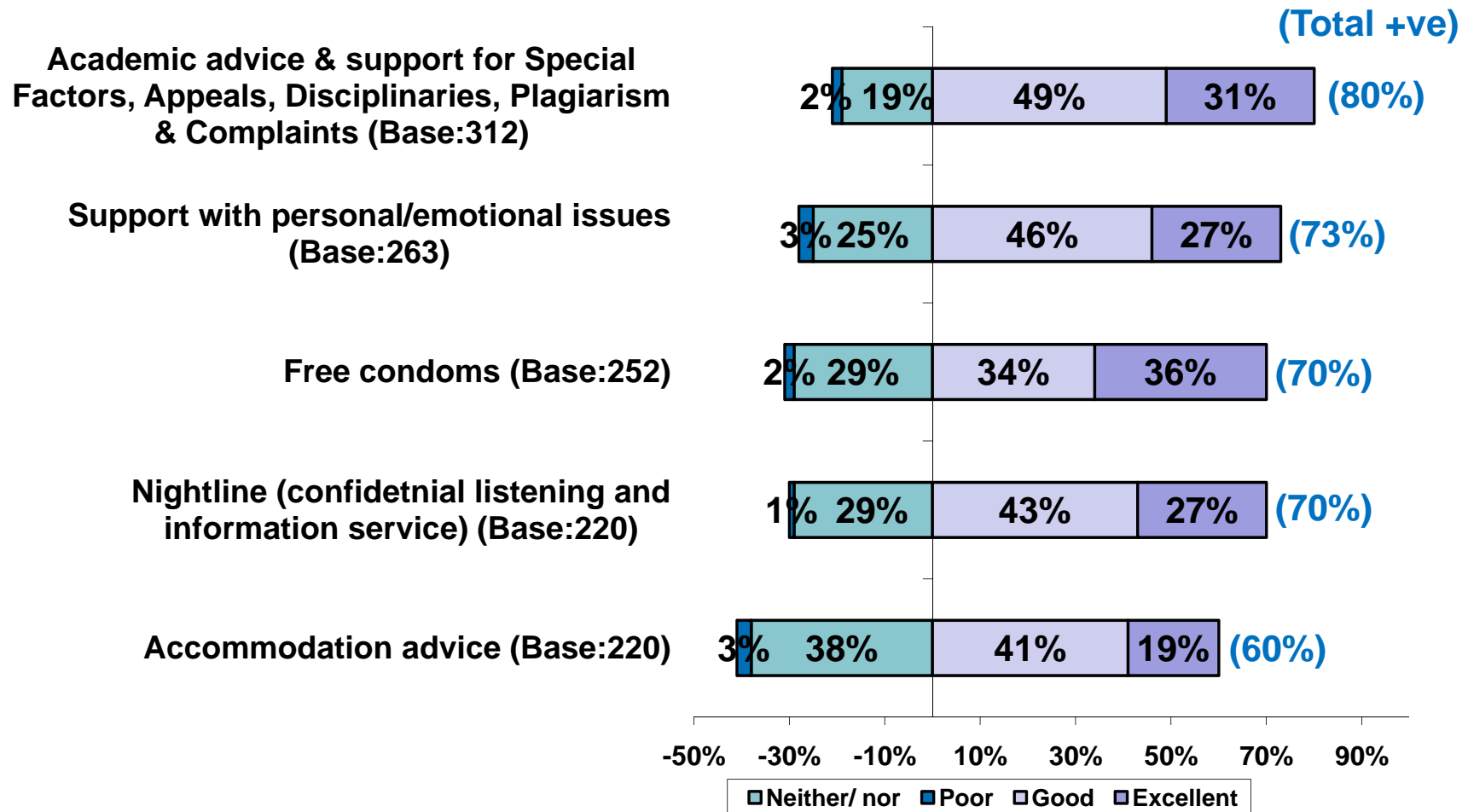
- Most (90%) aware of at least one of the services offered – positive, given that for many, such services are not ‘on their radar’
 - Note: awareness of any of the services is higher amongst full-time (92%) than part-time students (80%)
- Awareness for Nightline reasonably positive, yet fallen since last wave
- That said, awareness has increased for academic and personal/emotional advice and support
- Could awareness of Free Condoms and Accommodation Advice be higher?

Usage of SA Welfare Dept. services (prompted)



■ Given the distinctive, niche nature of these aspects, usage is relatively high

The Students' Association Welfare Department – ratings

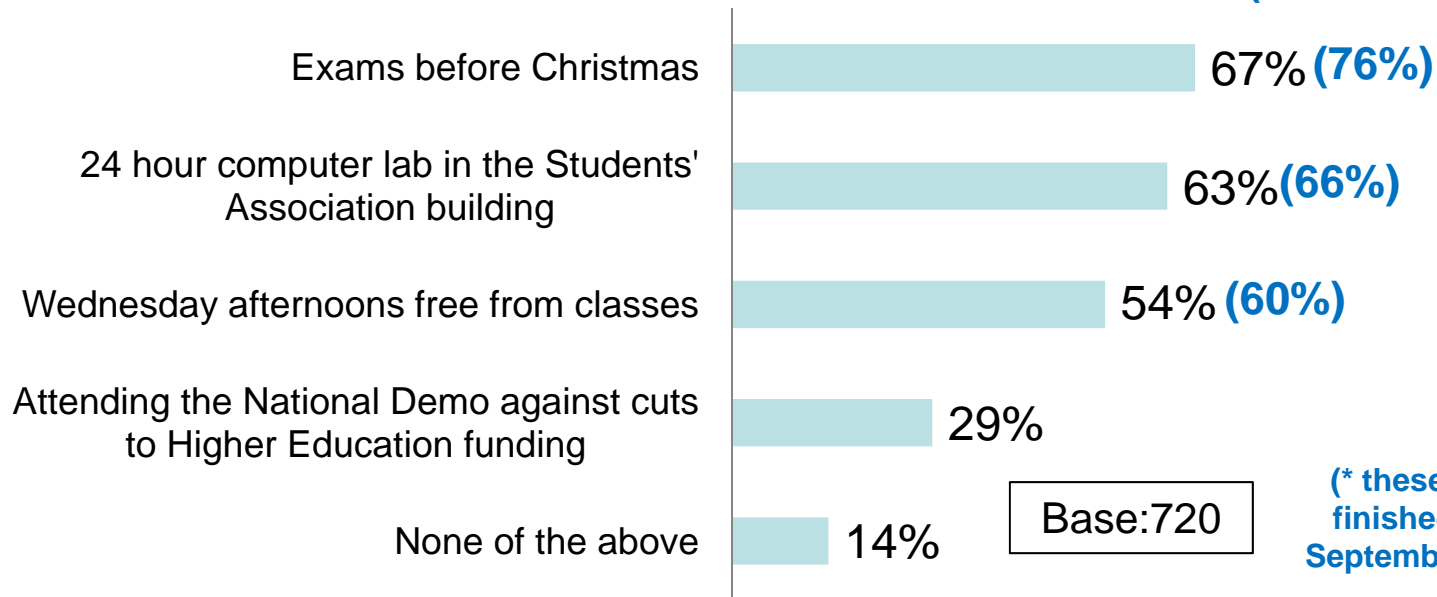


- Very little negative opinions of any service – academic advice scoring well (80%)
- Support with personal/emotional issues (73%) and Nightline (70%) – reasonably positive scores, given challenging nature of delivering these services
- Accommodation advice slightly lower – high neither/nor scores perhaps reflect room for improvement (or better management of expectations) rather than a poor service

The Students' Association campaigns

Prompted awareness of SA's campaigns

(Exc. Level 1/PG*)



(* these campaigns finished before the September 2010 entry)

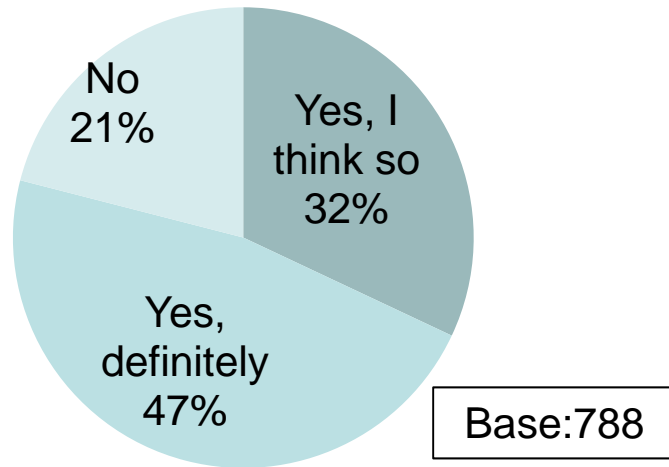
- Awareness of the SA's campaigns vary, although could overall awareness have been greater?
- Given the universality and relevance of Exams before X-mas, should more than around three-quarters (76%) be aware?
- Likewise, could the 24 hour computer lab (66%) and free Wednesday afternoons (60%) have enjoyed greater awareness?
- The National Demo – specific demo is less universal, therefore awareness is more acceptable, yet not huge
- Awareness of any campaigns is higher amongst full-time (88%) than part-time (68%) students and younger (90%) rather than mature (82%) students

- Further suggested areas for campaigning were given for further discussion and consideration...
- Study
 - Moving exams back to after Christmas
 - Provisions for bad weather affecting exams
 - Quicker coursework and exam marking/feedback
 - Less use of Saltire/study space PCs for social networking at the expense of doing actual university work/ more PCs
 - Longer access to GCU at weekends
- Money and finance
 - Student tuition fees
 - Cheaper food in canteen
- Social & political
 - Protest movements for wider social issues
 - Staff cuts

- Health & lifestyle
 - LGBT issues, inc. NHS blood ban for Gay people
 - HIV/sexual health awareness
 - Cheaper gym fees
 - Positive Mental Health promotion
 - Food – wider choice/ healthy food/ ethically sourced
 - Late night walk home service for students staying late
 - Eco-friendliness
- Inclusion & involvement
 - Fairer representation of part-time students
 - Fees and Visa challenges faced by international students

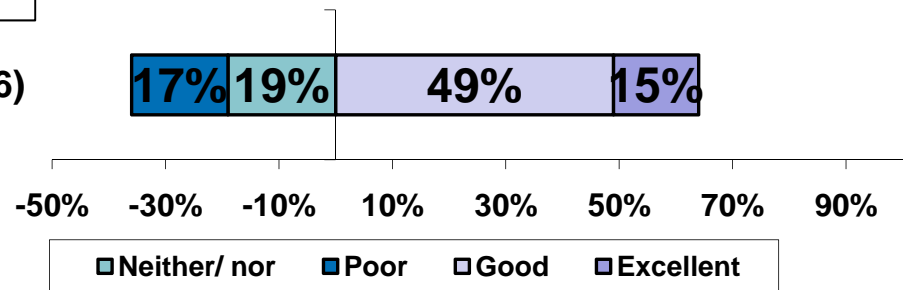
TheUnion@Walkabout

Awareness of the SA's relationship with the Walkabout to promote TheUnion@Walkabout



Usage of TheUnion@Walkabout (Base:787)	
Yes	58%
No	42%

Rating of the Union@Walkabout (Base:456)



- Most students (79%) aware of the relationship – this is higher amongst:
 - Undergraduates (83%) vs. postgraduates (59%)
 - Younger (88%) vs. mature students (69%)
 - Full time (80%) vs. part time students (56%)
- Of all students, 58% have been to the Union@Walkabout – positive
- Of those, 64% rated it positively, with 15% claiming it was excellent – a reasonably good endorsement of the relationship

- Students did comment that the Walkabout was fine for drinking, partying and eating and was in a good location
- However, for some it did not perform as well as more typical student unions regarding being somewhere to go to relax and have a quieter social time – something perhaps preferred by some mature students
- Furthermore, it did not have any exclusive GCU/student identity
- Unfortunately, these are not factors we can do much about

No atmosphere of a union, none of the activities (e.g. film nights and socials), its a pub that anyone can go into!

And not really the best place to chill, socialize, yet hold some kind of meeting. Lacks a distinctive GCU student flavour. Not really a place of our own yet! :)

...doesn't feel studenty

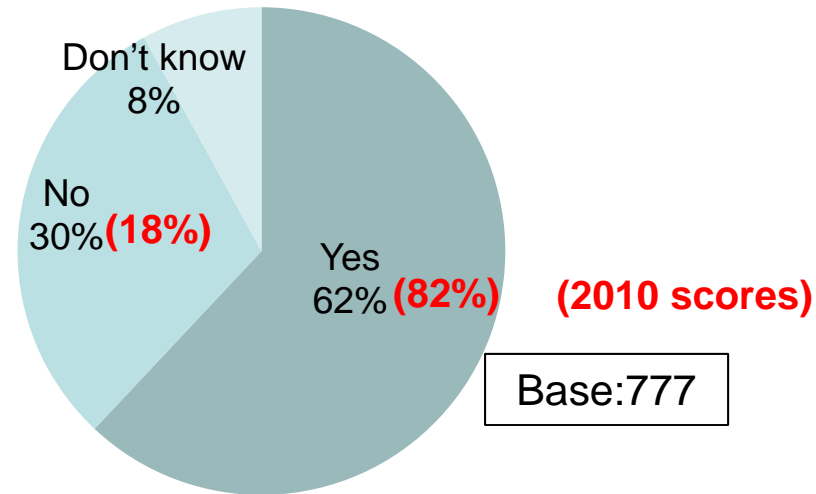
As a mature student I prefer a quieter atmosphere when I go for a drink

As a 47 year old, post-grad, mature student, Walkabout is more appropriate for my 24yr old son's social group than mine.

...feel to old

The Executive Committee

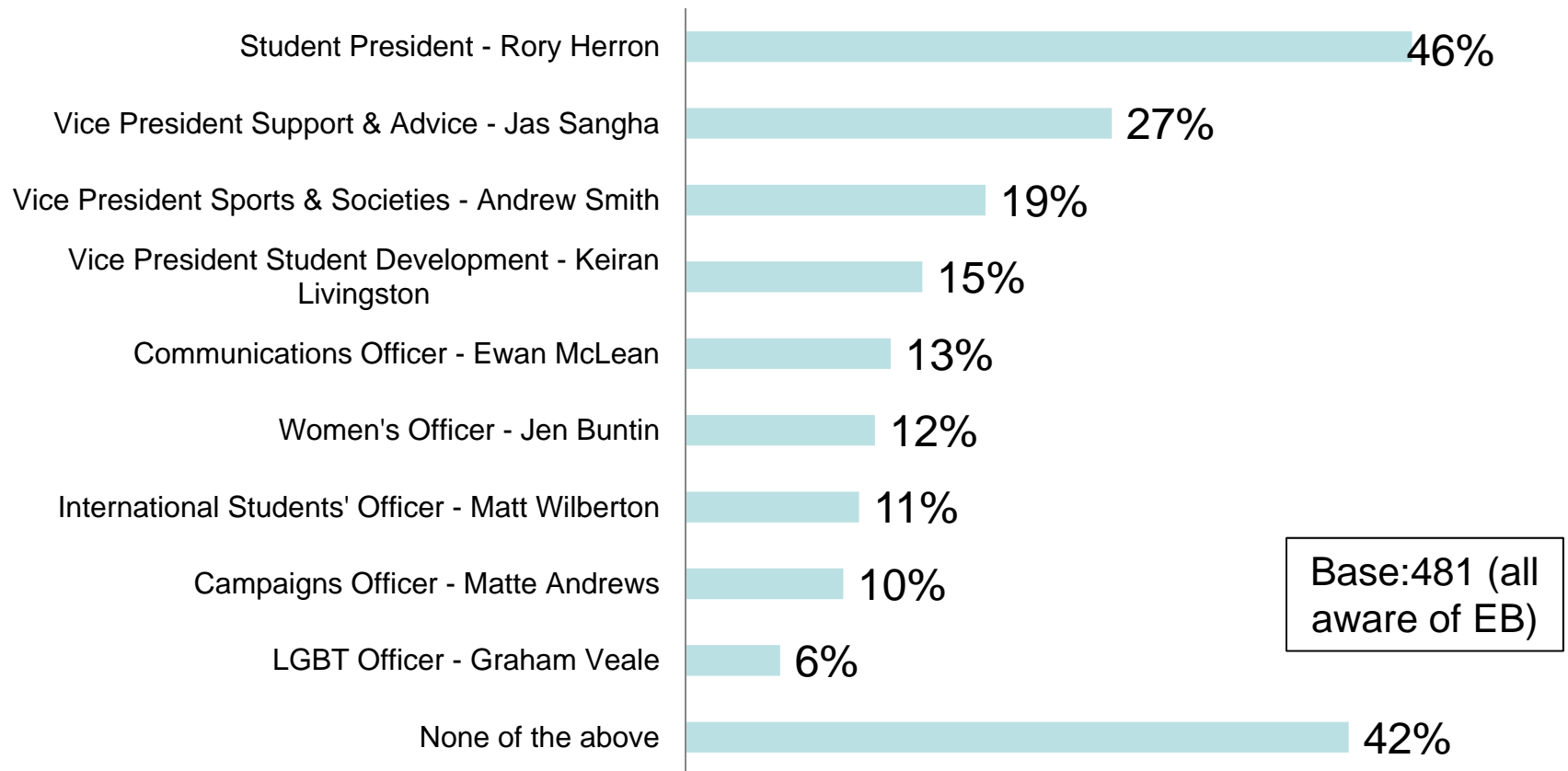
Awareness that the SA is run by an Executive Committee made up of students who are elected every year



- Perhaps room for improvement with 62% aware (down from 82% in 2010)
 - 43% of Level 1 students aware

The SA's Executive Committee

Awareness of Executive Committee members



- More than half (58%) of those aware of the Executive Committee's formation are aware of at least one of the members mentioned
- The Student President enjoys greatest awareness by just under half (46%) – could this be improved?
- Given the distinct roles of the rest, scores are perhaps acceptable

Students' Association offering – summary

- Regarding the main purposes of the SA, it is more strongly seen as a body for representing students and providing activities etc.
 - It's remit as a champion for student campaigning, personal development and employability is still not as prominent
- This is reflected in greater awareness of sports clubs and societies, as well as Radio Caley volunteering
- More limited awareness of other activities – such as Student Leaders' Programme – perhaps reflect their somewhat more 'niche' status – that said, greater awareness building would be beneficial
 - Note: awareness is lower amongst part-time and mature students
- Important to highlight that awareness of the Caledonian Student Parliament could be better, given its influence on the student experience
- Where people are aware, usage of these activities is promising
- Those who experience the activities tend to be satisfied, with very little negative opinion, although occasionally room for improvement or better management of expectations
- Suggestions for further future activities are provided for further discussion

Students' Association offering – summary

- Awareness of the Students' Association building is high, having grown from 2010, with 88% aware and 72% having been in the building
- However, awareness of facilities within the building (exc. the 24-hour access computer lab) are not as high as they could be – even amongst those who have been in the building
- Again, where people are aware, usage is acceptable; and satisfaction is promising – again, with some areas for improvement

- Awareness of the Students' Association Welfare Department's services is promising, as is usage amongst those that are aware
- Given the challenging nature of these services, there are minimal negative opinions. That said, aiming for improvements – as well as managing expectations – is important

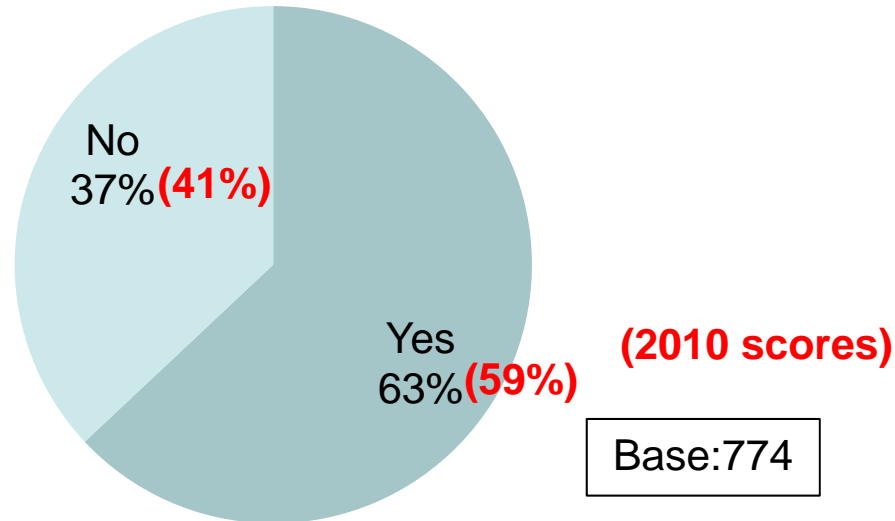
- Awareness of Students' Associations campaigns that are universal and relevant to all (e.g. Exams before X-mas) are not bad but perhaps could be greater – particularly amongst part time and mature students
- Further suggestions for campaigning were provided for consideration

Students' Association offering – summary

- Awareness of TheUnion@Walkabout is positive, particularly amongst younger, undergraduate, full-time students
- Usage of TheUnion@Walkabout is also positive, with more than half of all students visiting – most of these thought it was a good experience
- Greater promotion required in relation to:
 - The Students' Association being run by an elected committee
 - The identity of the Student President

Impact of the Students' Association

Is the Students' Association making a positive impact on your life as a student at GCU?



- Almost two-thirds (63%) feel that the SA is making a positive impact on their lives at GCU – no statistically significant difference to 2010
- Interestingly, the impact was greatest amongst International (80%) and EU students (77%), compared to domestic students (58%)

- The main reasons for making a positive impact were as follows...

Representing students – providing a voice

Providing opportunities to meet people

Providing support & advice on a range of academic and non-academic issues

Campaigning on students' behalf

Providing social spaces

Making students feel welcome

Providing sports, activities and societies etc.

Providing employability assistance, inc. volunteering opportunities & CV assistance

Working to enhance the overall student experience

- The main reasons for NOT making a positive impact revolved around a lack of awareness and engagement rather than any poor performance

Not aware of the full range of facilities & services

Lack of requirement for any of the facilities & services

Lack of interest in any of the facilities & services

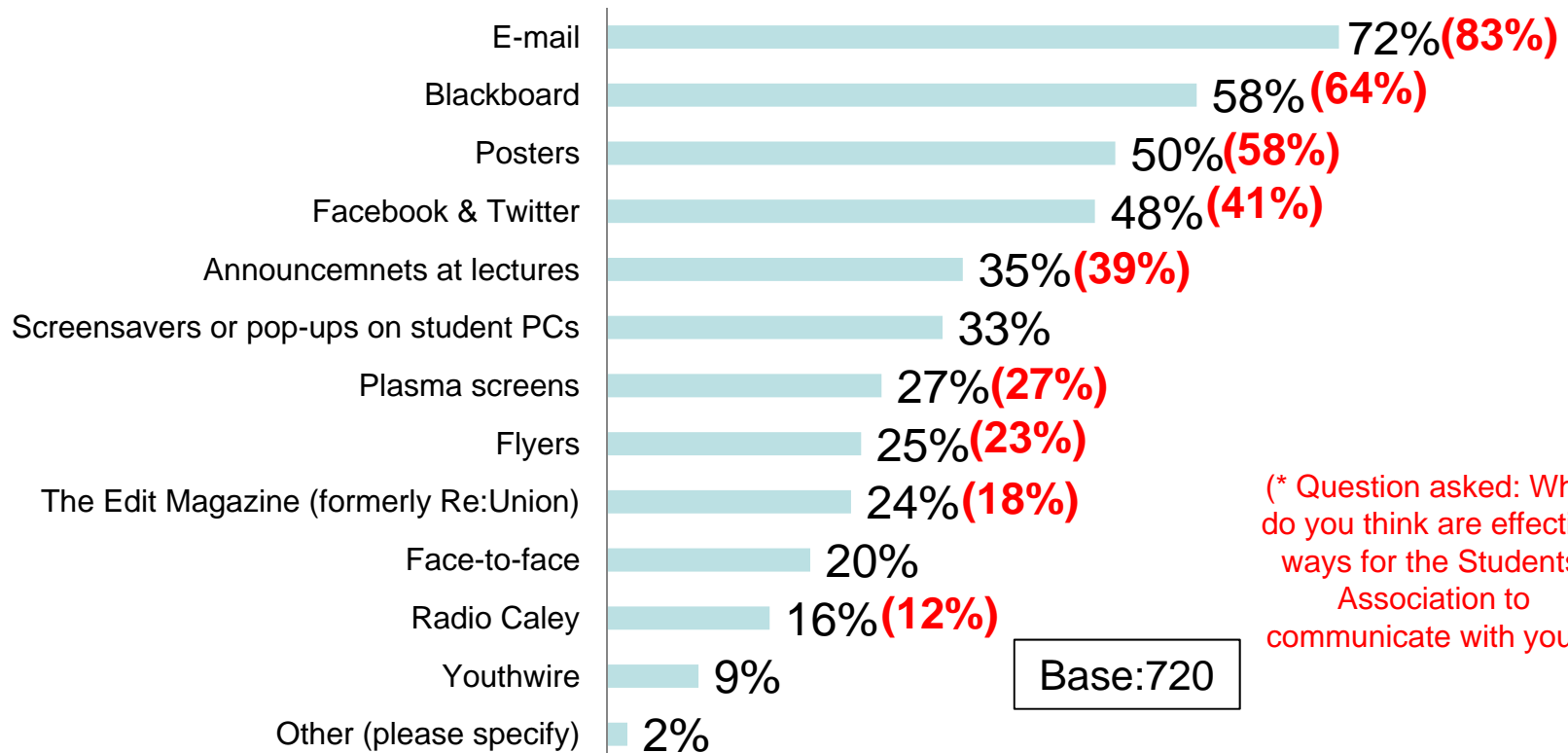
Not attended/ experienced any facilities or services

Perception that the SA is not there for them – predominantly amongst either mature and/or part-time students

Students' Association communications

Students' interest in SA communications (prompted)

(2010 scores*)

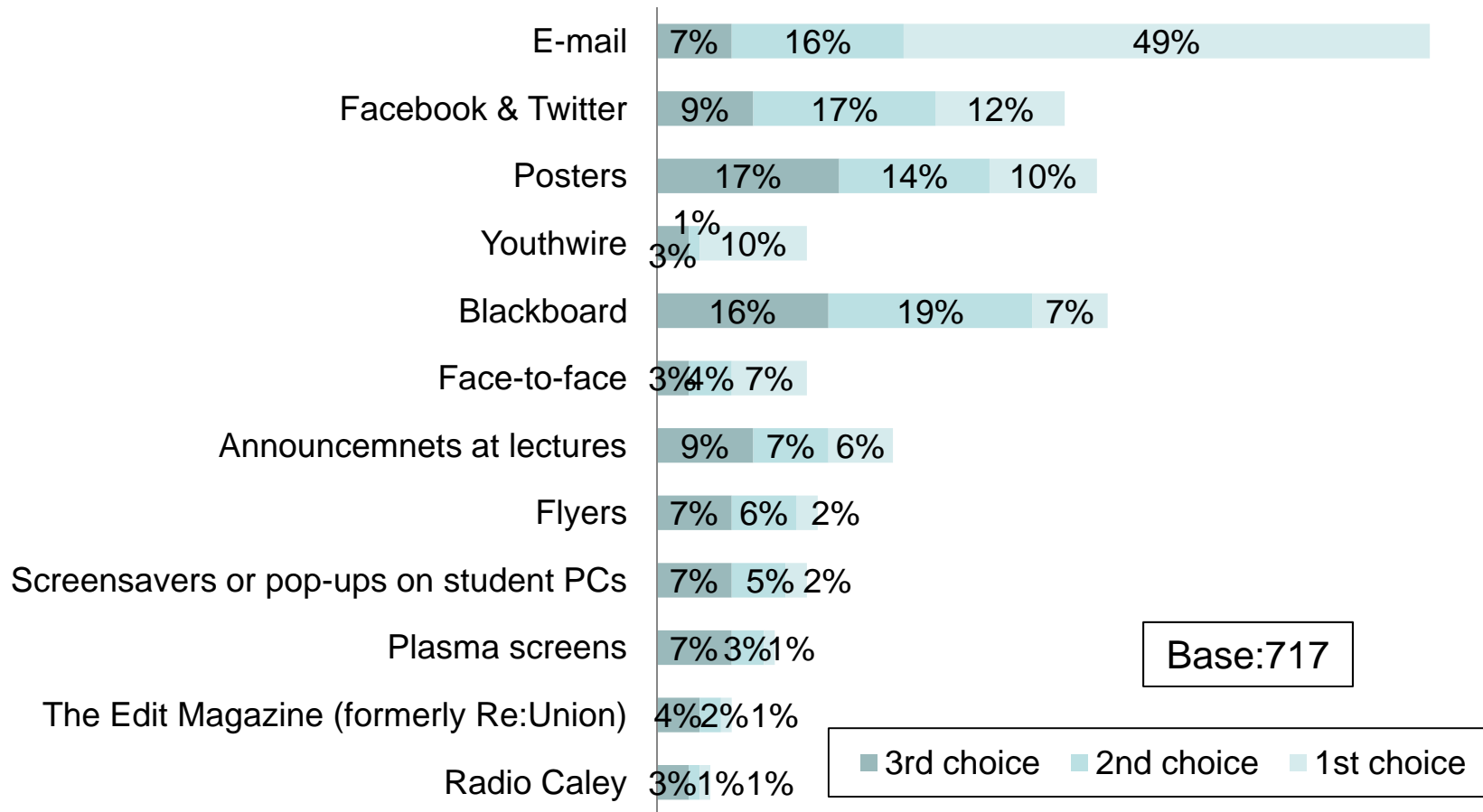


(* Question asked: What do you think are effective ways for the Students' Association to communicate with you?)

- Ranking is the same as in 2010, with email enjoying the greatest interest by almost three-quarters (75%)
- Blackboard and Posters liked by around half
- Note: interest in the top 3 has however, dropped since 2010
- Statistically significant rise from 41% to 48% for Facebook & Twitter from (note: this was 'Facebook & Bebo' in 2010)

Students' Association communications

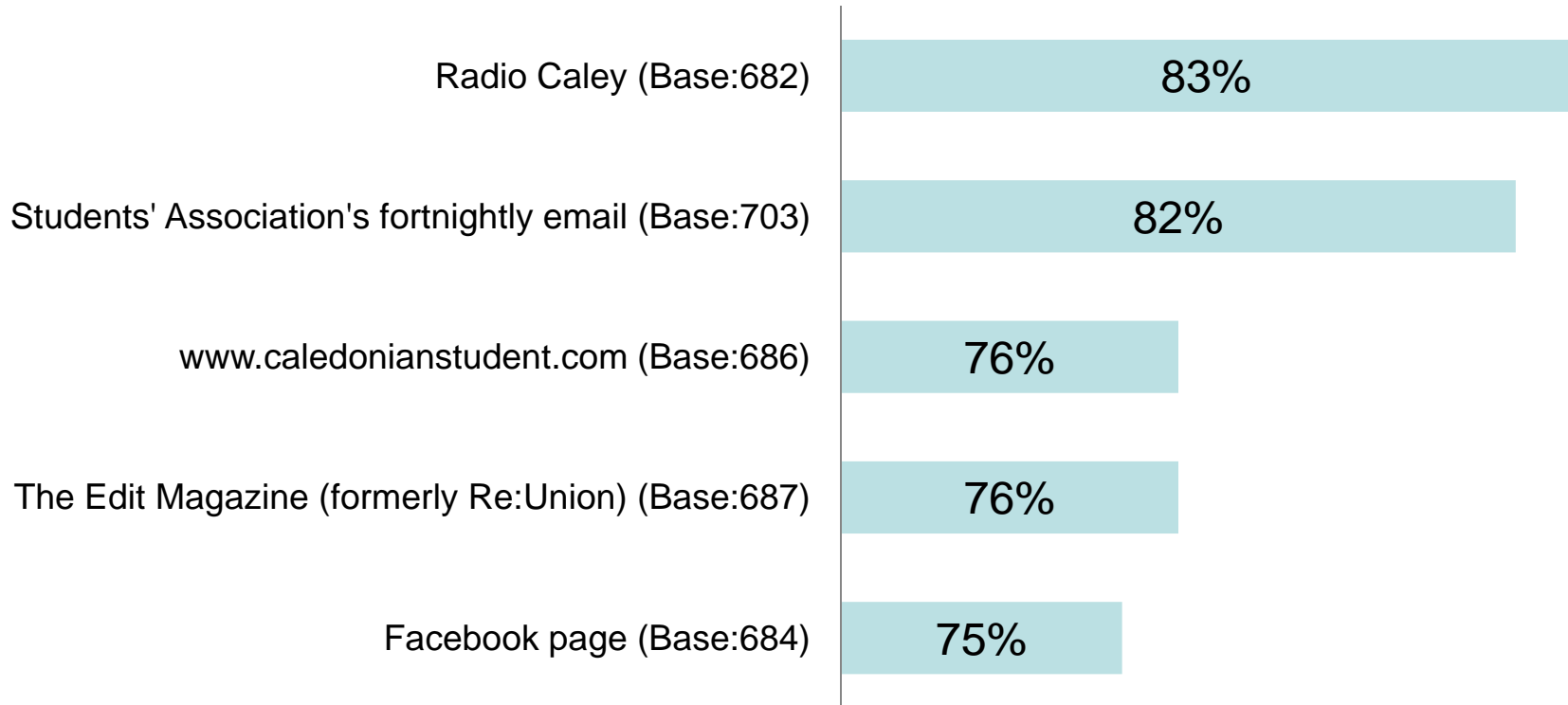
Students' preferred method of SA communication (ranked by 1st choice)



- Email a clear winner – first choice for almost half (49%)
- Other electronic media 1st choice amongst around one-tenth – Facebook & Twitter (12%) and Youthwire (10%)
- Posters, however, equally popular (10%)

Students' Association communications

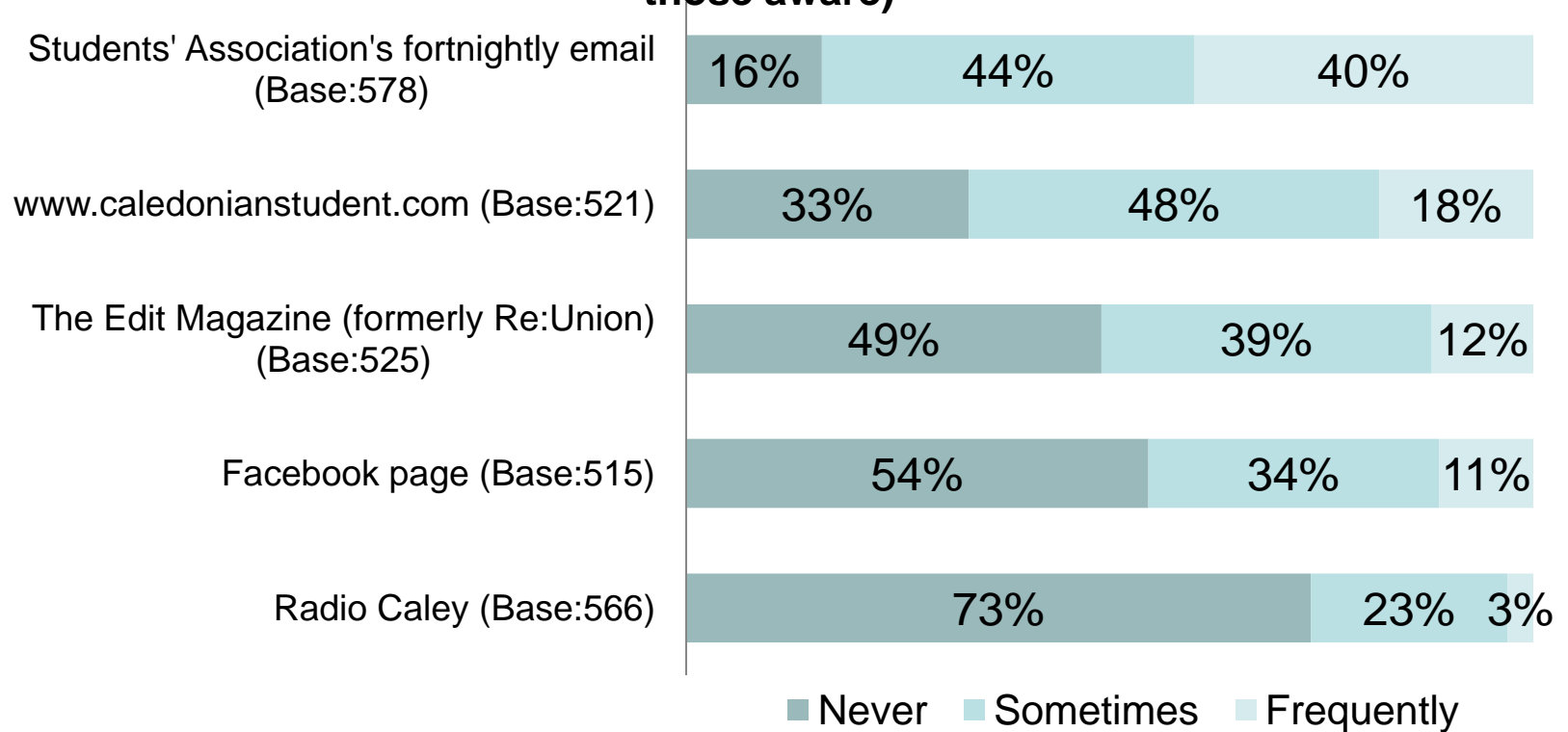
Awareness of SA communications



- Radio Caley and the fortnightly email enjoying good awareness – 83% and 82% respectively
- Reasonable awareness for the rest (around three-quarters) – website and magazine (76%); Facebook page (75%)

Students' Association communications

Regularity of reading/listening to SA communications (amongst those aware)



- E-mail is well read – 84% reading; most (44%) doing so sometimes
- Two-thirds looking at the website – around half (48%) sometimes and 18% frequently – positive
- Just over half (51%) reading the magazine – again, this is positive
- Facebook page – over half have never looked at it – could this be improved?
- Radio Caley – listened to by around one-quarter (26%) – reasonably positive

Conclusions

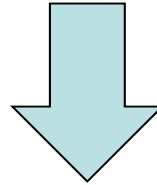
- The Students' Association is making a positive impact on the lives of almost two-thirds of students
- For those not affected positively, this is more down to: a lack of awareness or engagement and the opinion that the SA is 'not for them' (particularly amongst mature and part-time students) rather than any poor performance
- Across the offering, there appears to be a need – in many areas – for greater awareness of all that is on offer and its' relevance to everyone
- Moreover, when aware, a good proportion of students use the services
- Furthermore, most services perform well. Very little negative opinion exists, however, aspiring to improve and manage student expectations is important
- Building awareness is best done via electronic means, although posters are still welcome:
 - Email is still the most effective, followed by Blackboard
 - Facebook & Twitter continue to grow

Keep building awareness

These services exist

These are the benefits and this is the relevance to you – get it ‘on their radar’

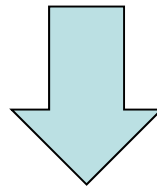
Across all sub-groups of students



Keep aspiring to be better

Monitor and gauge performance – speak to frontline staff as well as students and regularly review

Ensure students expectations are well managed



Communicate

Predominantly electronic communications/social media

However, don't ‘overload’