

Changes in student/staff attitudes to sustainability 2017-2019

1. Introduction

This report explores changes in student and staff attitudes to sustainability 2016/17 – 2018/19. It draws on six surveys (participants and survey details are outlined in Table 1). The significant drop in response rate between years has arisen due to restrictions on survey distribution to ‘all’ email accounts. Note: comparisons between years use different samples of the student and staff population, they do not compare individual cases. Only students and staff based in our main Worcester campuses were invited to respond, with around 10,000 students and 1,200 staff.

Table 1. Summary of Questionnaire responses

Student Survey 2017	1118 respondents
Student Survey 2018	258 respondents
Student Survey 2019	529 respondents
Staff Survey 2017	506 respondents
Staff Survey 2018	180 respondents
Staff Survey 2019	372 respondents

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Knowledge of ‘Sustainability’ efforts on campus

Table two below shows a range of sustainability activities and records student and staff knowledge. For example in this data we can say that for three years knowledge of non-specialist recycling efforts on campus are consistently around 60% or above for both student and staff populations. During this period the information posters and stickers on bins about what you can and cannot recycle on campus remained the same. In order to improve recycling rates on campus, a pilot in Student Halls of Residence trialled a new poster, developed by and for students, and studies are being undertaken to evaluate its impact, including recording the volumes of recycling and waste to landfill weekly for a two month period. For more details see [Recycle League](#)

Knowledge of disposing of food waste for students has ranged between 45% and 61% but for staff levels of knowledge are lower at 38% to 53%. This is perhaps understandable as students are provided with caddies if they live in Halls and staff only have caddies if they specifically request them because it is their responsibility to empty them into the communal food collection bins.

Levels of recycling electronic waste are consistently lower across all 3 survey years for both populations with just 31% of student respondents and 22% of staff respondents in 2019 stating they have a lot or a fair amount of knowledge of how to dispose of these items on campus.

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Activity	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Student 2017	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Student 2018	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Student 2019	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Staff 2017	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Staff 2018	Knowing a lot or a fair amount Staff 2019
Recycling of glass, plastic and paper	57%	62%	60%	64%	76%	67%
Recycling electronic waste (e.g. mobile phones)	19%	18%	31%	47%	24%	22%
Disposing of food waste	61%	45%	51%	53%	42%	38%
Donating unwanted items	38%	29%	37%	47%	28%	27%

Table two: Student and staff knowledge of sustainability activities on campus for 3 academic years 2016/7- 2018/9

2.1.2. Rating of University of Worcester's efforts to tackle sustainability issues

Student and staff ratings of the University's efforts to improve sustainability on campus have fluctuated between 2017 and 2019 (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Whilst ratings have tended to improve amongst students (increase in 5 out of 7 ratings), staff ratings generally declined (reduction in 4 of 7 ratings). Overall the areas of decreased awareness are greatest for both staff and students in the three areas of transport; encouraging bus, cycling and car share. This may be due to a reduction in bus services and special offers with First Bus, and fewer publicity campaigns to increase car share. It is unclear why the staff's rating of 'campus maintenance being conducted in an environmentally friendly manner' have declined to this extent. The reduction in staff assessment of activity to conserve energy and changes in student/staff attitudes to sustainability to tackle greenhouse gas is also difficult to interpret. This may be a result of the post of sustainability coordinator being on hold for a couple of years as their role includes communication and behaviour change.

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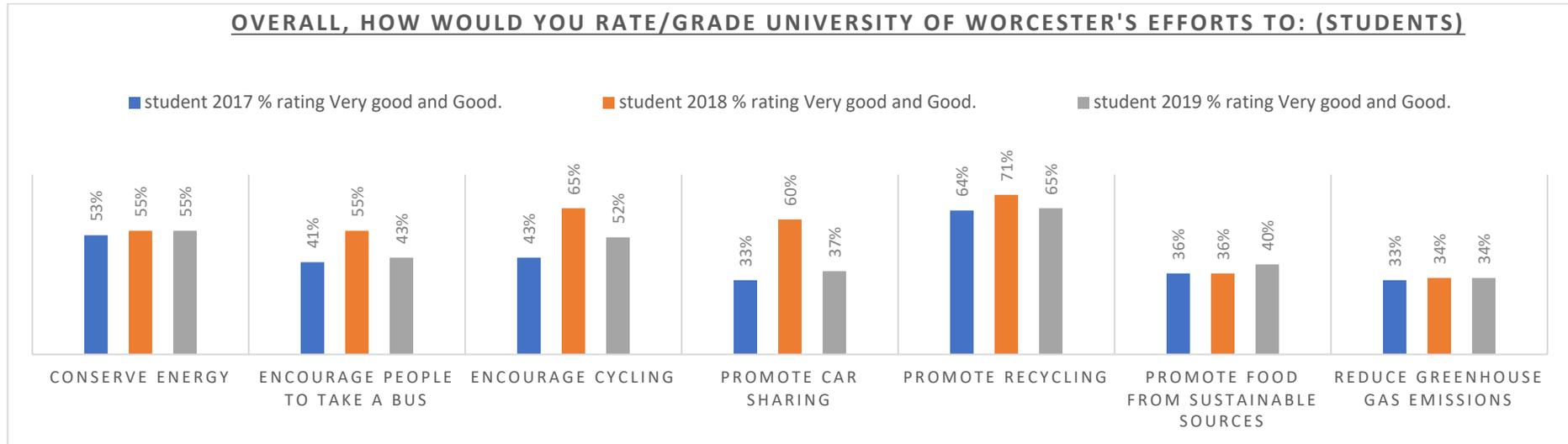
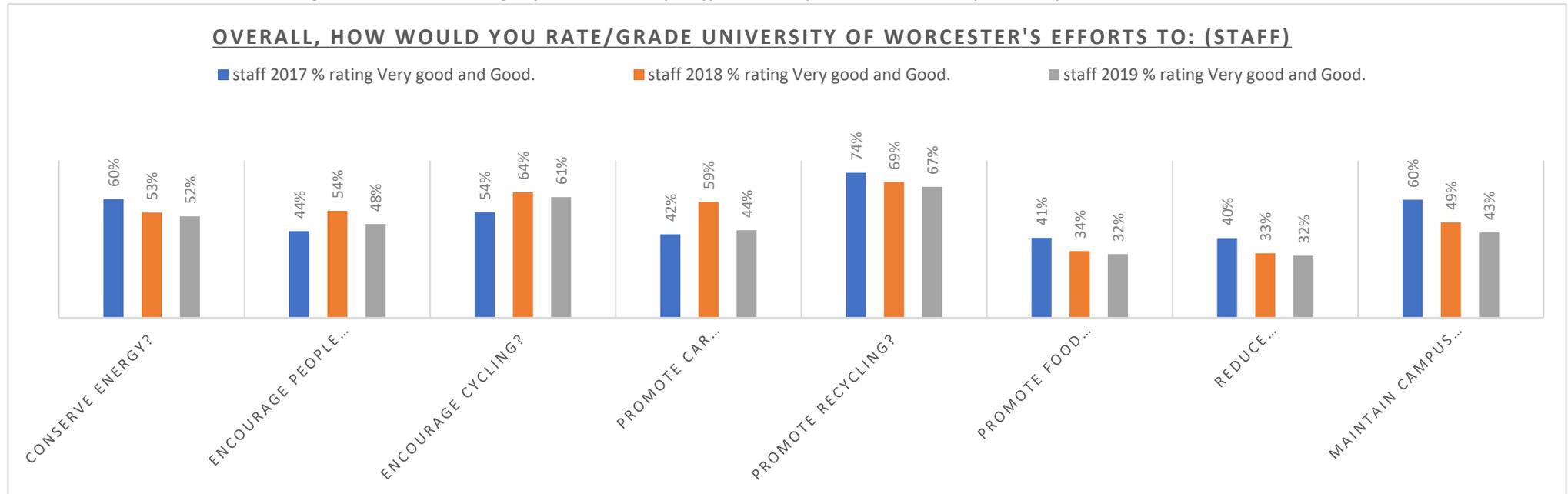


Figure 3: Student ratings of the University's efforts to improve sustainability on campus in 2016/17 – 2018/9



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Figure 4: Staff ratings of the University's efforts to improve sustainability on campus in 2016/17 – 2018/9

2.1.3. Student accommodation and sustainability

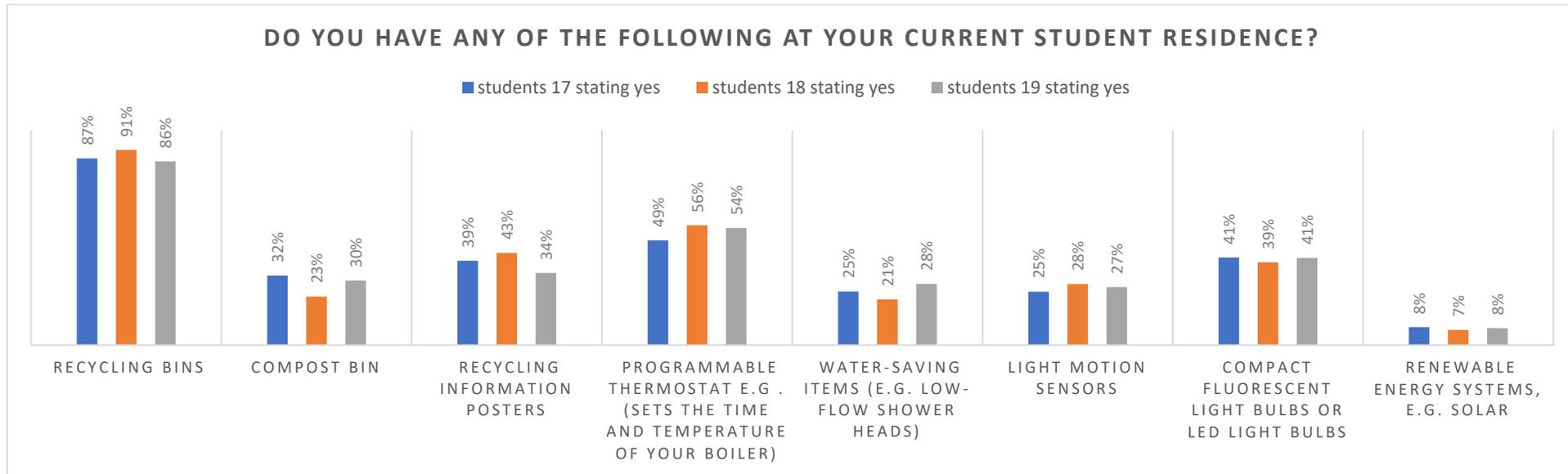


Figure 5: Sustainability initiatives in student homes

Over the three year survey period there remains a consistent level of availability of low carbon initiatives within student homes. This is not surprising as landlords are responsible for providing these investments, and many such as renewable energy and LED lighting do require a capital investment. Students either live on campus in University owned and managed Hall, or in private rented accommodation which is licensed by the local authority Worcester City Council. The Students' Union has a longitudinal research study Energize Worcester which brings together National Union of Students, Worcester City Council, local boiler manufacturer Worcester Bosch, students and local student landlords to improve sustainability in off-campus student shared houses. This is a very valuable vehicle for promoting sustainability behaviour change in all these key stakeholders. More about this research can be found [here](#).

2.1.4. Individual commitment to sustainability

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The stated commitment to sustainability actions by students is evidenced in their responses to frequency of carrying out a selection of sustainability activities (Figure 6). Since 2017 there is a 7% rise of students doing community volunteering, a 4% rise of students participating with the student switch off and a 3% rise of students doing a course that addresses sustainability.

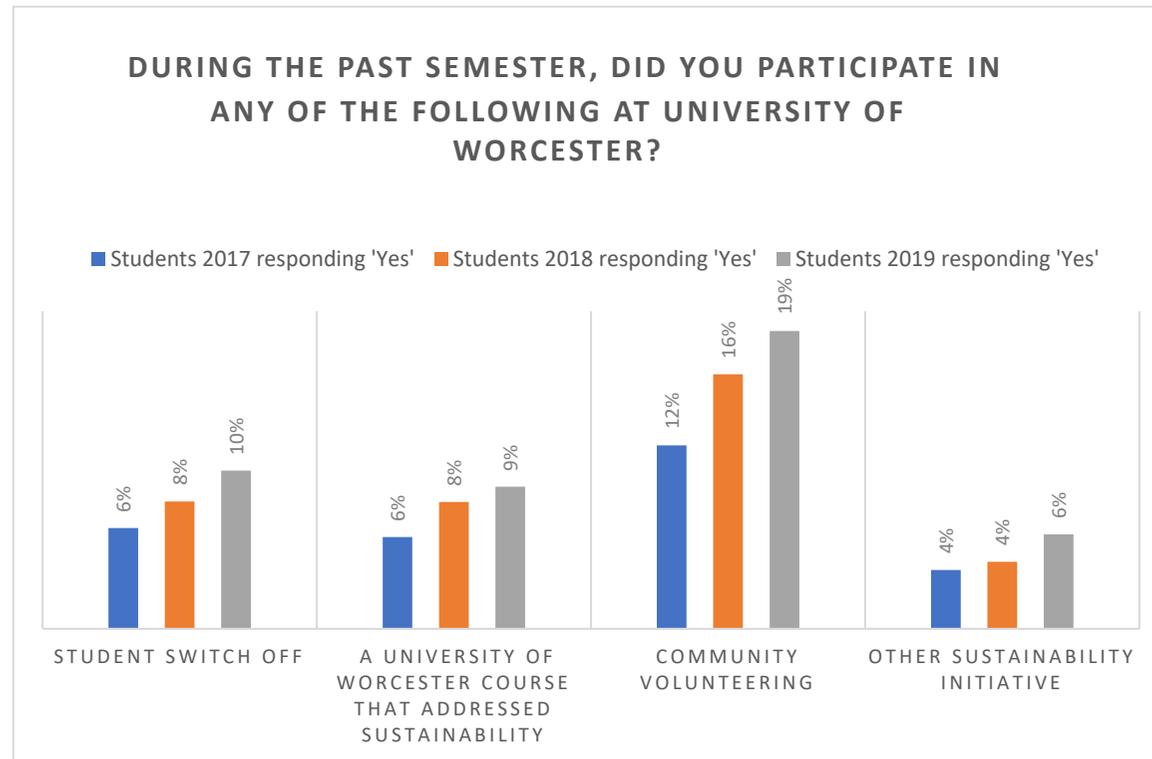


Figure 6: Student sustainability activities

Physical activity and being 'in nature' are well documented as being beneficial to people's health and wellbeing. The university is interested in collecting data and setting baselines about this issue. It has an established mile long trail around St. Johns campus with a range of resources associated with it, including information pamphlets on what you are likely to see in different locations in different seasons, and markers showing the route. The pie chart below indicates that only 17% of students knowingly used the trail. Developed in conjunction with the Students' Union, to increase students' use of the external facilities of the campus, additional planting of wildflower strips and

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information boards are being introduced. Once complete there will be several communications, events and activities to help raise awareness. The information boards will also explain the health benefits of walking and physical activity.

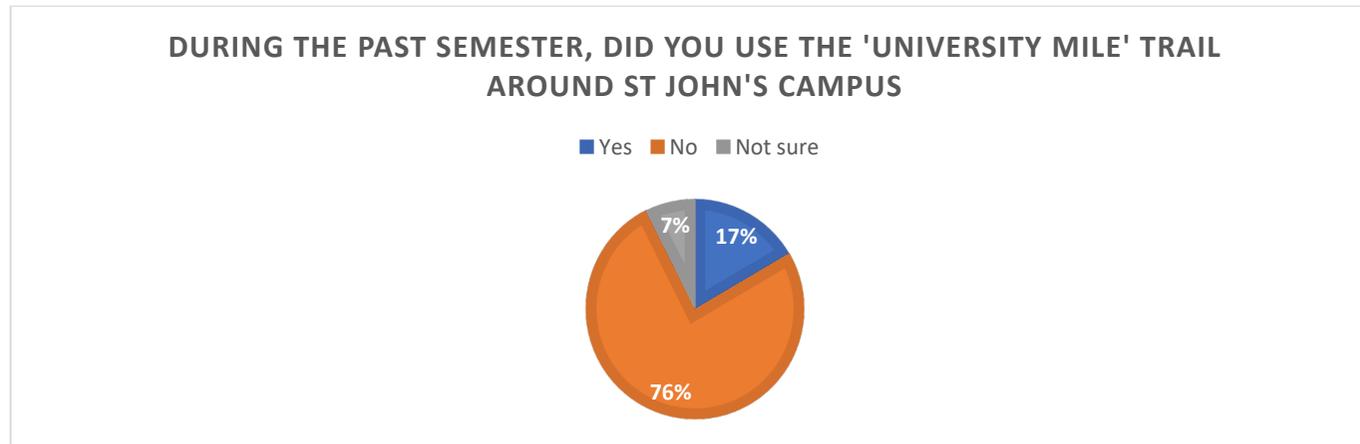


Figure 7: Student use of the University nature trail around the St John's campus 2019

2.1.5. Staff home and lifestyle choices and sustainability.

Staff have generally increased or kept the same lifestyle choices and sustainability activities (Figure 8) with the vast majority recycling, having low carbon lighting and programmable boiler controls. Nearly half the respondents have compost bins, whilst fewer staff have invested in renewable energy systems such as solar PV to generate electricity, or solar thermal to pre-heat hot water.

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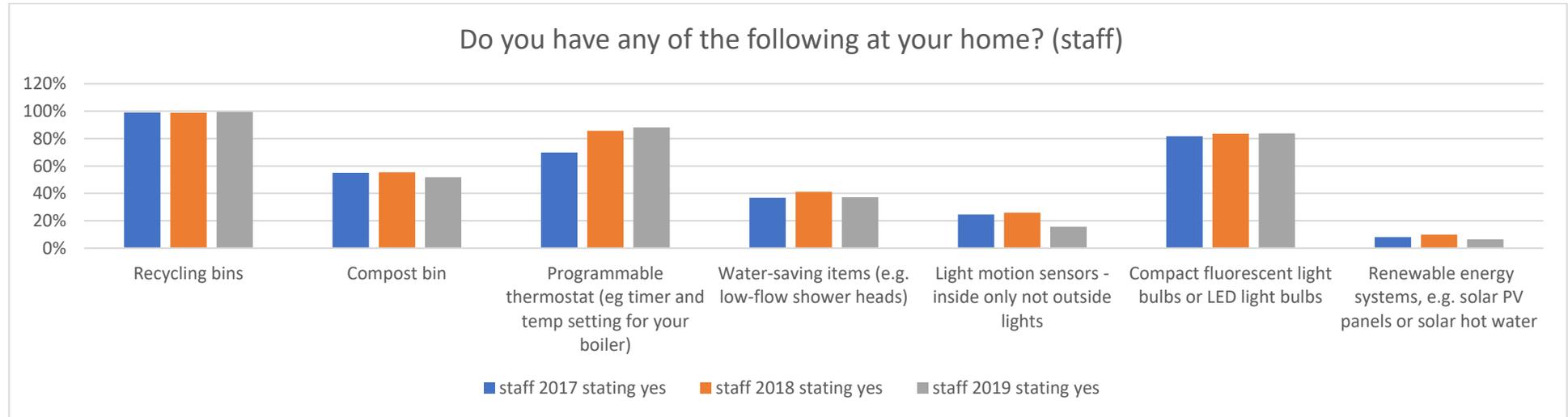


Figure 8: Staff home and lifestyle choices over three years 2017-2019

2.1.6. Student and staff commitment to sustainability changes over three years 2017, 2018, 2019.

As figure 9 demonstrates, there is a very high level of commitment to sustainability within the staff at the University: 96/97% over all three years. This fits the University's values and strategies where sustainability has been a key feature in the last three University Strategic plans and is as prominent in the current iteration [University of Worcester Strategic Plan 2019](#), see page 6.



Figure 9: Student and staff commitment to sustainability for three years 2017-2019.

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2.1.7. Individual actions for sustainability

	Turn of lights when leaving a room	Switch off electrical appliances when not in use	Set thermostat to 18 degrees or lower during cool or cold weather	Print double-sided to save paper	Operate washing machine only when you a full load of clothes	Limit time spent in the shower	Use a reusable water bottle, coffee cup, travel mug, etc.	Shop for items with minimal packaging	Donate unwanted items, e.g. using the British Heart Foundation donation banks on campus	Purchased something second-hand from a charity shop or from an online site such eBay or Gumtree	Check recycling labels on products before deciding which bins they should be deposited in	Repair a broken item or visit a local Repair Cafe
student 2017 Always/most of the time	69%	53%	24%	42%	65%	26%	58%	19%	16%	20%	38%	15%
student 2018 Always/most of the time	71%	50%	20%	36%	65%	25%	57%	16%	13%	19%	36%	15%
student 2019 Always/most of the time	15%	31%	25%	24%	15%	30%	21%	31%	23%	29%	27%	22%
staff 2017 Always/most of the time	84%	69%	47%	64%	82%	50%	66%	33%	44%	32%	62%	22%
staff 2018 Always/most of the time	87%	69%	41%	63%	78%	45%	60%	30%	43%	31%	61%	20%
staff 2019 Always/most of the time	81%	58%	37%	63%	83%	38%	63%	28%	43%	29%	59%	21%

Figure 10: student and staff sustainability actions over three years 2017 -2019.

The stated commitment to sustainability actions by staff is evidenced in their responses to frequency of carrying out a selection of sustainability activities (Figure 10). Staff have generally stayed within a few percentage points for the frequency of carrying out sustainable actions between 2017 and 2019 (9 of 12 activities). The largest decreases were in energy related actions, ‘switching off items not in use’, ‘reducing heating thermostats’, and ‘time spent in the shower’. Here the decrease for 2019 was around 10% compared to the two previous years. Whilst causality cannot be proven, more efficient appliances and stable salaries may have contributed to the fewer energy saving actions of staff. The picture for students is more mixed. There is a drop from 69% to 15% of switching lights off when leaving rooms, and this may be because for many students presence and absence detection is in place in rooms, so they do not need to switch lighting on or off. The reduction for appliances is less marked, around 50% to 31%.

The other actions have stayed at similar levels throughout the survey period.

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Conclusion

The evidence presented suggests that staff and student perceptions of sustainability on campus are generally positive and that their attitudes and actions have mostly stayed similar over the academic years 2016/7 through to 2018/19. There are notable exceptions where behaviours have reduced significantly, and the University has taken note and is looking at mitigation measures. The report has also identified a number of areas for improvement in motivating behaviour change for sustainability and it has also highlighted the need to more powerfully publicise and market the University's strategic strength in this important area amongst students and staff.

Actions

The following major actions have been implemented in response to the results of measuring over time students and staff sustainability 'culture' on campus. Numerous smaller actions implemented via the Green Impact programme have also been led by a joint partnership between student Green Impact Project Assistants and departments and Schools.

Activity	Responsibility	Date
Recycle League – inter University recycling competition, change information materials	Campus Services/Students Union/Sustainability department	October/November 2019. Pilot new materials semester 2 2020
White Bags – recycling competition for local primary schools and their families	Student Digital Creative Assistants/Platform Housing/sustainability department	November/December 2019 to February 2020
Energize Worcester. Longitudinal study into energy, heating and boiler controls and decision making by students and landlords in student shared off campus housing.	Students' Union/ National Union of Students/ Worcester Bosch/ Worcester City Council/ University Accommodation and Sustainability departments	5 years and ongoing
Go Green Weeks for students and staff	Student's Union/Sustainability Department/School of Science and Environment	Annually in February
Student Switch Off	Sustainability department	In semesters 1 & 2
Green Impact – 17 teams in 2019/20	Whole institution and SU	Annually October - March
Learning for Responsible Futures. Scaffolding project to embed sustainability into schools and departments	Director of quality and education/academic lead for sustainability	Annual call – date varies.
Pilot Night bus	SU/Campus Services/Sustainability department	Semester 1 2019
Woo Bikes – 50 e bike city wide bike share scheme with large employers	Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership/ Worcestershire County Council/ Worcester City Council/Gtech/Academic Lead for sustainability/sustainability department/charity Emily Jordan Foundation	2.5 years from Feb 2018- July 2020
Natural Networks grant to increase biodiversity on campus including information boards	Grounds team/ Students' Union/sustainability department	Summer 2020