

International Student Perspective UK

Breakout Report: Impact of the Erasmus Student Network on Students Mobile in the UK



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International Student Perspective UK Breakout Report: Impact of the Erasmus Student Network on Students Mobile in the UK.

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Erasmus Student Network United Kingdom

esnuk.org.

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Introduction

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) UK is a charity which aims to promote and support all forms of mobility to and from the UK. It is an umbrella organisation of fifteen local organisations that operate as university societies in fifteen UK HEIs across England, Scotland, and Wales.

These local organisations are run by students who interact directly with incoming and outgoing mobility students. In particular, they support incoming students by providing advice and organising a wide range of activities which promote social and cultural integration in the UK. Examples of common activities include buddy programmes, in which local and international students are paired, language mixers, and social activities such as pub quizzes, board game nights, and study sessions.

This breakout report of the International Student Perspective UK research project aims to analyse the impact of interaction with ESN on students who study abroad in the UK, either by taking part in a mobility programme or studying full-time at a UK university.

It demonstrates the reach of ESN in the UK, providing an insight into the types of activities international students in the UK are interested in participating in. Importantly, however, this breakout report illustrates the positive impact of local ESN organisations in the UK by providing evidence of a tangible link between student enjoyment and involvement in ESN activities. This report concludes that ESN sections have a significant positive impact on international students' opinions of institutions, through analysing satisfaction with student organisations, such as university societies.

Methodology

This report was created as a breakout report of ESN UK's earlier publication: *'International Student Perspective UK: Evaluating Experiences and Perceptions of Studying Abroad in the United Kingdom'*.

Here, we use the same data to investigate firstly the overall level of interaction with ESN among the participants, before comparing the results in some areas between those who interacted with ESN and those who did not.

For full details of the methodology used in survey design, data collection and analysis, please refer to the full report's 'Methodology and Limitations' section.

For full details of the demographics of the sample, please refer to the full report's 'Sample Characteristics' section.

Interaction with ESN

This section investigates the level of awareness and interaction students had with ESN while in the UK, and acts to separate the sample in the following section.

Awareness of ESN

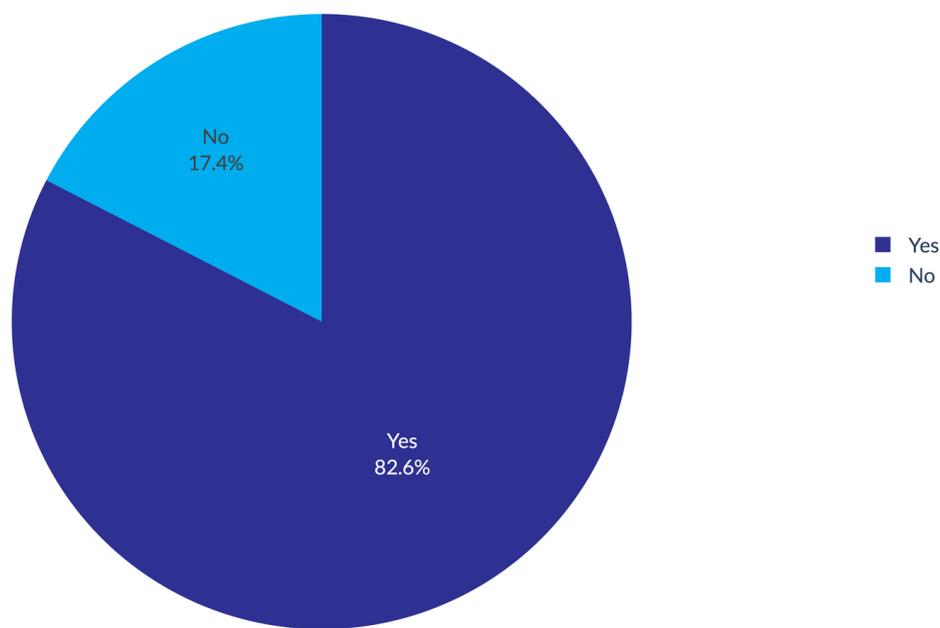


Figure 1.1 - Responses to 'Were you aware of ESN (Erasmus Student Network) during your time abroad?' (n=465)

Of the 465 respondents who were mobile in the UK, the majority (82.6%) were aware of ESN during their time abroad, with just over one-sixth (17.4%) responding that they were not.

Participation in ESN Activities

Of the 465 respondents who were mobile in the UK, the majority (69.7%) stated that they participated in activities organised by a local ESN organisation. 26.7% responded that they did not participate in any ESN activities, and another 3.7% responded that they were unsure.

Reasons for this uncertainty could include attending activities aimed at international students but being unsure of the organisers at the time or possibly attending an event of a partner of an ESN organisation.

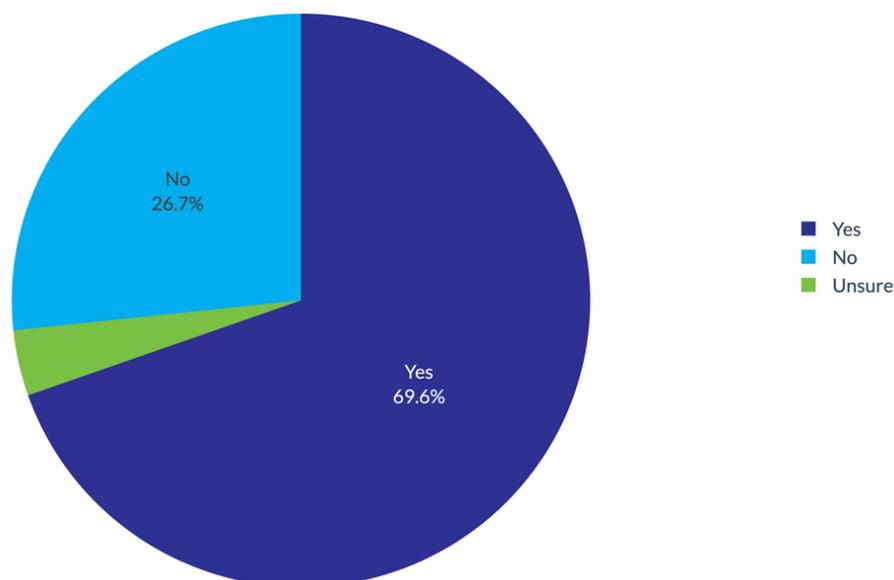


Figure 1.2 - Responses to 'Did you take part in activities run by an ESN local organisation?' (n=465)

Spread of Responses

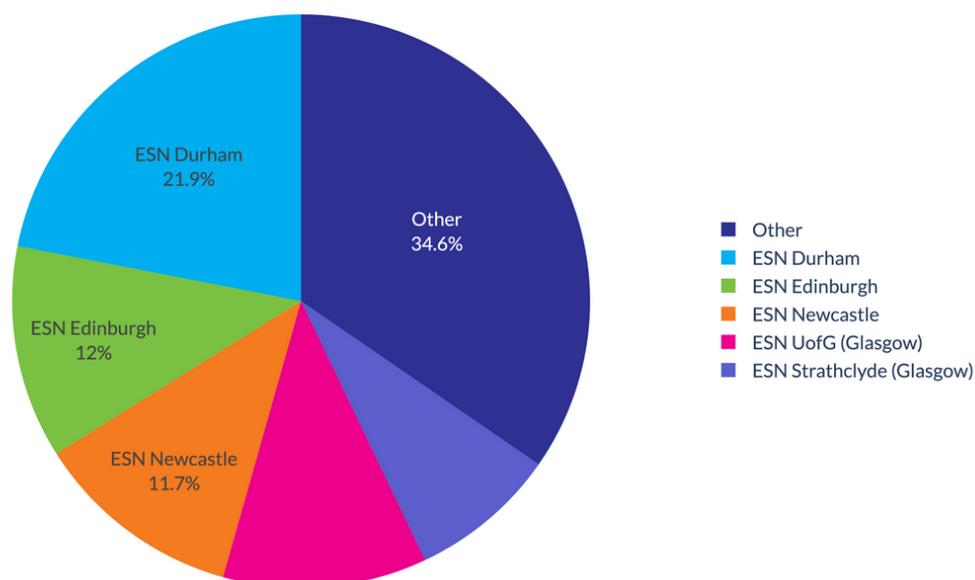


Figure 1.3 - Responses to 'Which ESN organisation's activities did you take part in?' (n=324)

Of the 324 respondents who reported interacting with ESN, 21.9% responded that they took part in events organised by ESN Durham, 12% attended those by ESN Edinburgh, 11.7% attended those by ESN Newcastle, and 11.4% attended those by ESN University of Glasgow. Other notable sections include ESN Strathclyde, ESN Aberystwyth, ESN Imperial (London), and ESN Aberdeen.

In total, 17 UK ESN sections were represented in the survey by participants (including some which are currently inactive).

Frequency of Participation in Activities

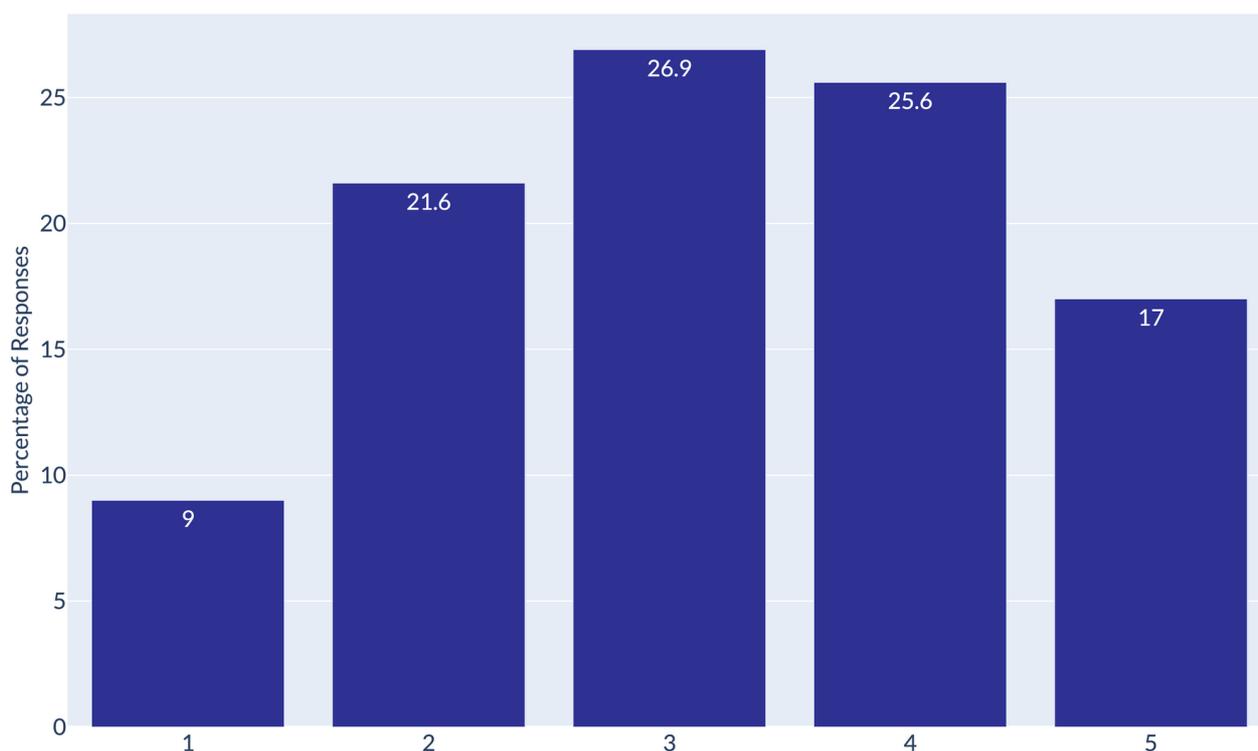


Figure 1.5 - Responses to 'How often did you take part in ESN activities?' (n=324)

Respondents were asked to rate how often they took part in activities organised by ESN - with '1' meaning 'very rarely' and '5' meaning 'very often'.

Of the 324 respondents who interacted with ESN, 17% responded '5', 25.6% responded '4', 26.9% responded '3', 21.6% responded '2', and 9% responded '1'.

Type of Activities Participated In

Of the 324 respondents who reported interacting with ESN, when asked what type of activities they participated in, 84.57% responded 'meeting other international students'.

80.56% responded that they attended social events such as quizzes, pub crawls and movie nights. 39.81% responded that they went on a trip elsewhere in the UK, including ESN UK's national Edinburgh trip. 21.6% participated in an ESN buddy scheme in which local and international students are paired together. 8.64% participated in a sports activity, and 6.48% participated in an event that supported the local community.

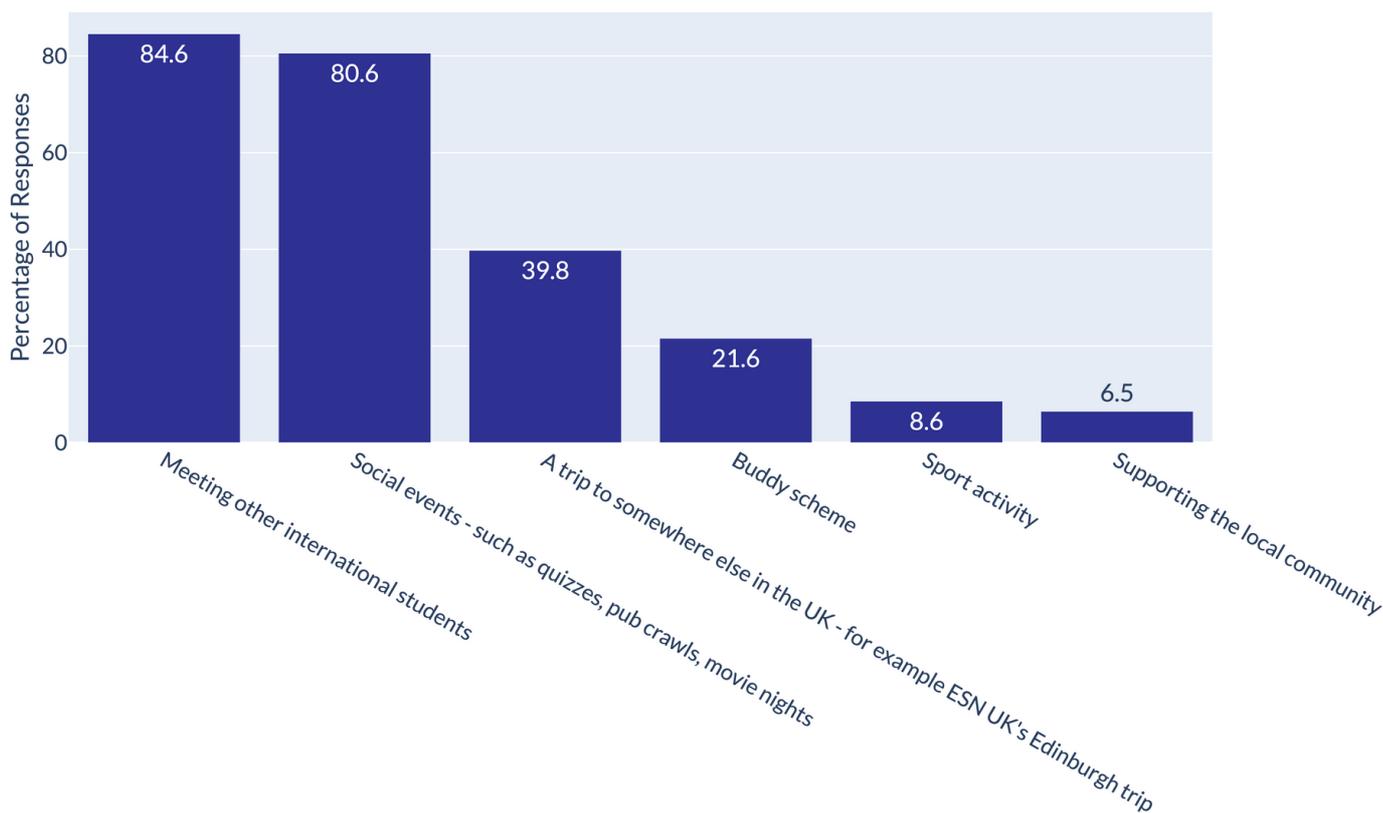


Figure 1.6 - Responses to 'What type of activities did you take part in with ESN?' (n=324)

Causes of ESN

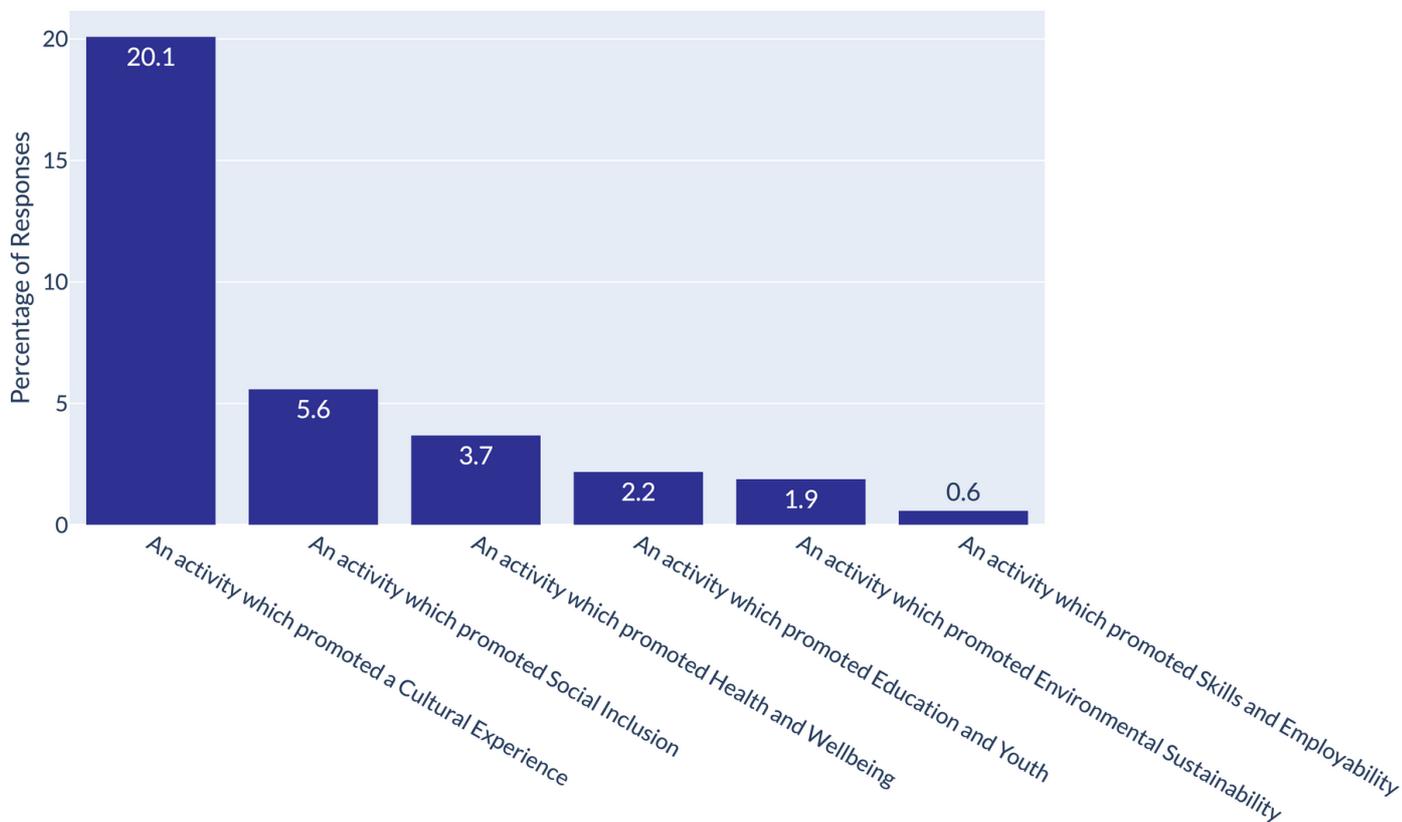


Figure 1.7 - Responses to 'What type of activities did you take part in with ESN?' (n=324)

The six 'causes' of ESN are Culture, Social Inclusion, Health and Well-being, Education and Youth, Environmental Sustainability, and Skills and Employability. These causes are promoted through the activities organised by local ESN organisations with the aim of increasing their impact on the incoming students and local communities. This question analysed whether respondents had taken part in activities which promoted each cause.

Of the 324 respondents who interacted with ESN, 20.1% reported that they took part in an activity that promoted a cultural experience, the most common response.

5.6% reported that they took part in an activity which promoted Social Inclusion, 3.7% reported that they took part in that which promoted Health and Wellbeing, 2.2% reported that they took part in that which promoted Education and Youth, 1.85% reported that they took part in that which promoted Environmental Sustainability, and only 0.62% reported that they took part in an activity which promoted Skills and Employability.

Purchase of ESNcard

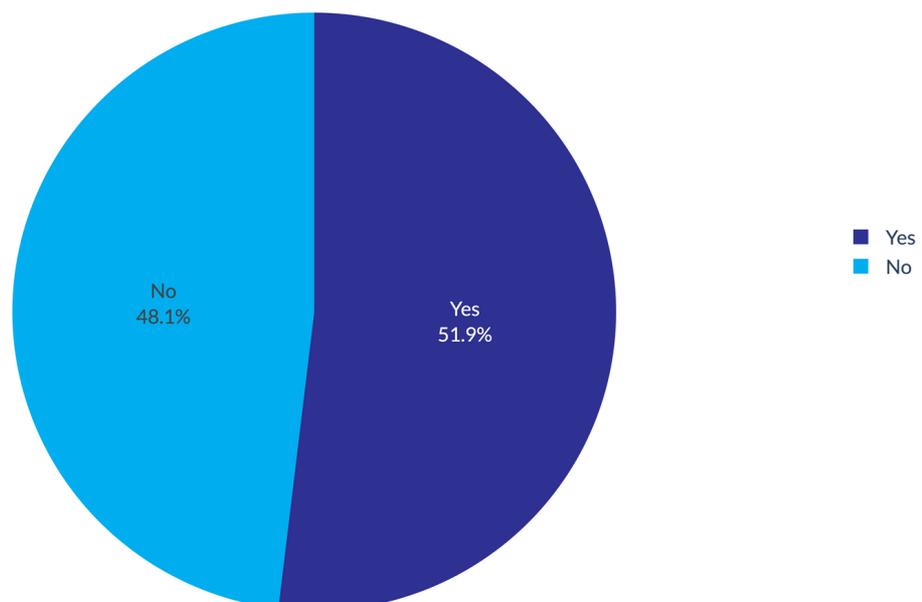


Figure 1.8 - Responses to 'Did you purchase an ESNcard?' (n=324)

The ESNcard is the membership card of ESN, which grants access to activities and provides discounts locally, nationally, and internationally.

Just over half (51.9%) of the 324 respondents who interacted with ESN purchased an ESNcard when in the UK. The other half (48.1%) did not purchase an ESNcard.

Impact of ESN

This section aims to analyse the impact of ESN. In some cases, questions are asked directly about the impact of ESN to those respondents which reported interaction with ESN, and in some, responses to general experience questions are compared between respondents mobile in the UK who reported interaction with ESN, and those who did not.

Satisfaction with Social Life

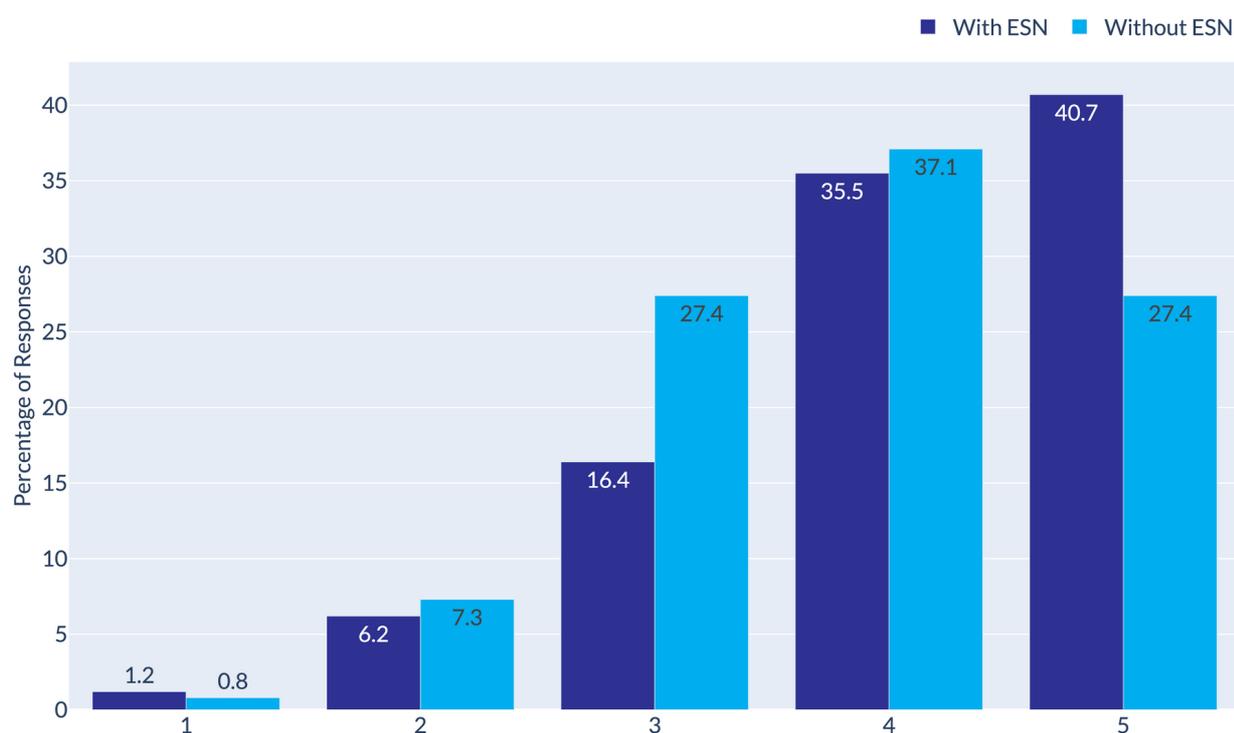


Figure 2.1 - Responses to 'I was happy with my social life in the UK' (n=465)

Respondents were asked to answer on a 5-point scale (1-5), with '1' meaning 'strongly disagree' and '5' meaning 'strongly agree' with the statement 'I was happy with my social life in the UK'.

Those who did report participating in ESN activities were much more likely to strongly agree that they were satisfied with their social life by responding '5' compared to students who did not report participating in ESN activities (40.7%, compared to 27.4%).

Overall Enjoyment of Time in the UK

Respondents were asked to answer on a 5-point scale (1-5), with '1' meaning 'strongly disagree' and '5' meaning 'strongly agree' with the statement 'I enjoyed my time in the UK'.

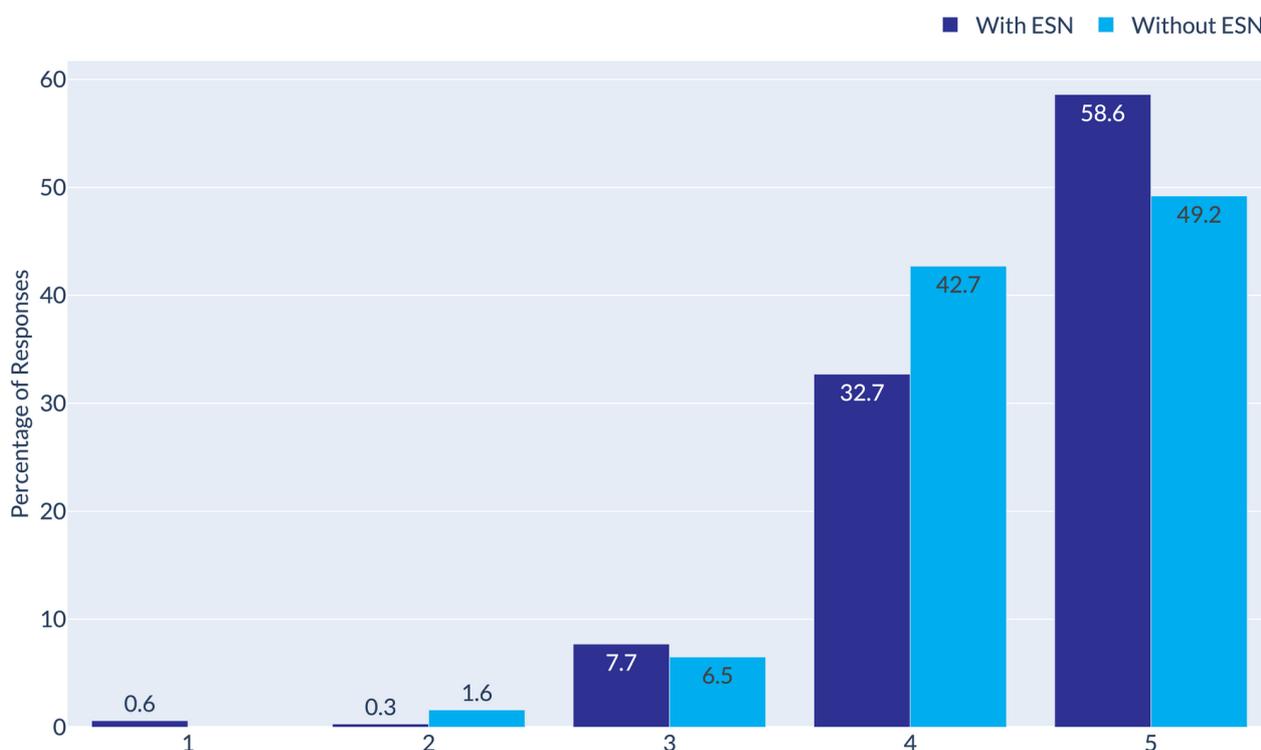


Figure 2.2 - Responses to 'I enjoyed my time in the UK' (n=465)

Of the 465 respondents mobile in the UK, those who reported interaction with an ESN organisation were more likely to reply '5' (strongly agree) than those who did not report interaction with ESN (58.6% compared to 49.2%)

Support from Student Organisations

When asked about their satisfaction with support from student organisations, those who reported interaction with ESN were nearly twice as likely to report being 'very satisfied' than those who reported not interacting with ESN (40.7% compared to 22.6%).

Levels of reporting 'very dissatisfied' were similar among both groups, but students who did not interact with ESN were nearly twice as likely to respond 'neutral' compared to those who did interact with ESN (25% compared to 13.3%) and over twice as likely to respond 'dissatisfied' (8.1% compared to 3.7%).

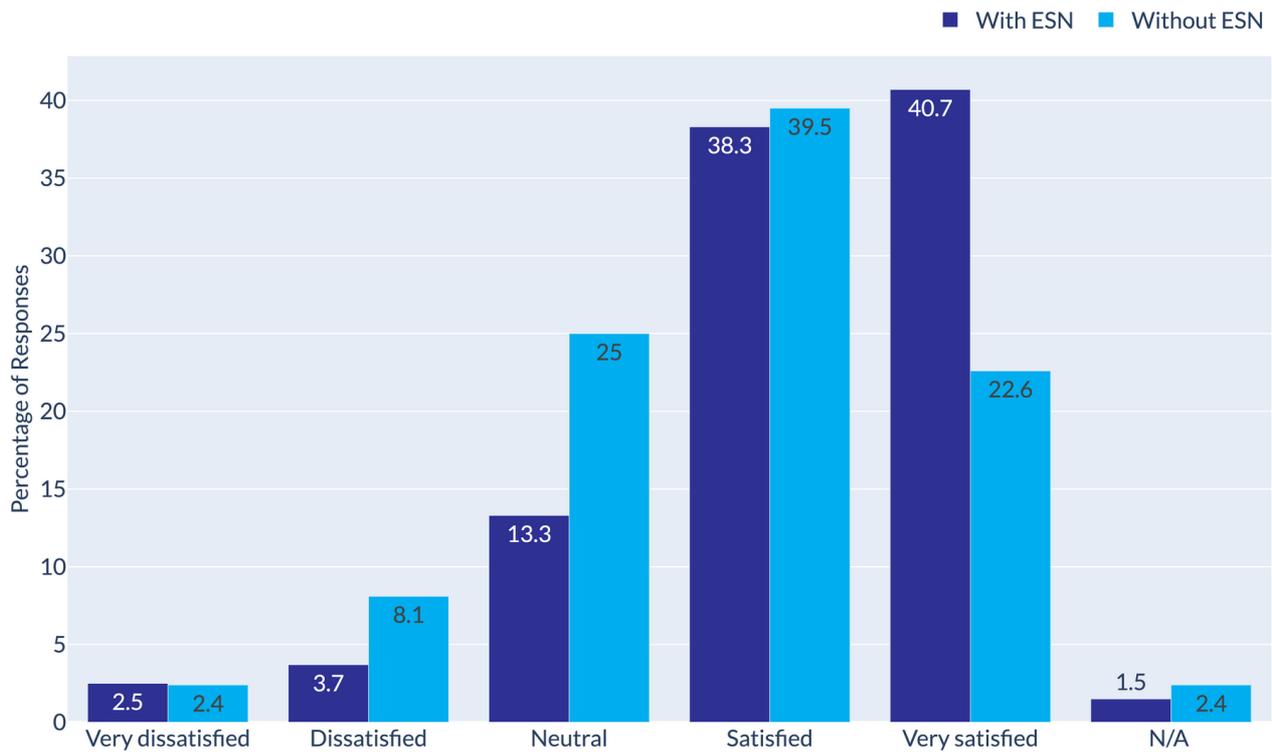


Figure 2.3 - Responses to 'How satisfied are you with the following? [Support from student organisations (e.g. societies)]' (n=465)

Self-Reported Positive Impact

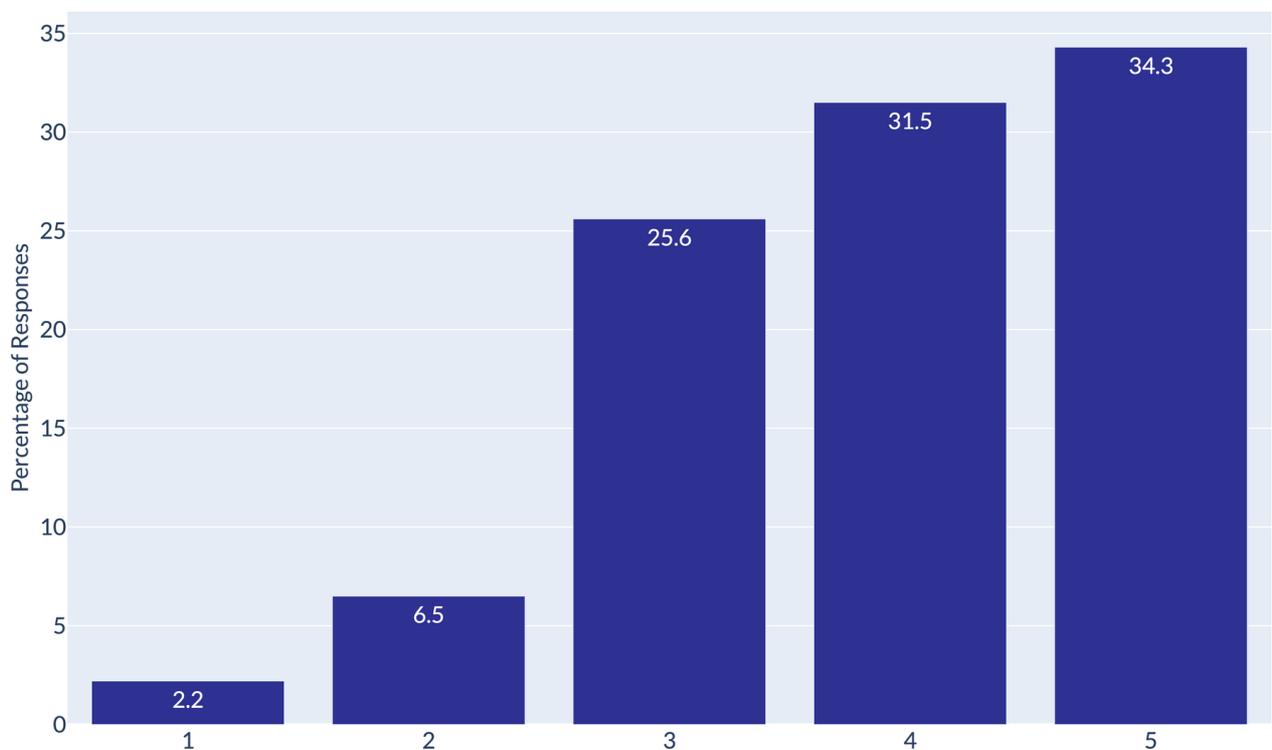


Figure 2.4 - Responses to 'ESN positively impacted my time in the UK' (n=324)

other students and it felt like a very traditionally British thing to do'

- 'All the gatherings with other international students helped me to feel not so alone and like I am the only one that struggles with certain things.'



Figure 2.6 - Wordcloud based on most common words used in response to 'Tell us about something you didn't do in the UK, but wish you had done' (n=208)

When asked about an activity respondents wished they had taken part in but didn't, respondents primarily mentioned travelling to different parts of the UK and Ireland, as well as interacting more with locals.

Some of the full responses included:

- 'Volunteering with the local community'
- 'I would have liked to connect more to UK local students. As an Erasmus student it was a bit hard to get to know them (except if they were also taking part in the ESN society).'
- 'I really wish I could've traveled more (especially to Scotland and Ireland).'

About ESN and ESN UK

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is the key volunteer student organisation in international Higher Education in Europe, with over 15,000 members in more than 1000 Higher Education Institutions in 44 countries across Europe and beyond. ESN supports the educational, social and cultural integration of international students and provides practical information about various exchange programmes for incoming and outgoing students. The mission of ESN is the enrichment of society through international students, and its activities comprise hundreds of projects developed at local, national, and international levels.

Erasmus Student Network United Kingdom (ESN UK) is the national branch of ESN in the UK, a registered Scottish charity (SC051188) operational across England, Scotland, and Wales. Active since 1991, our mission is to promote and support the internationalisation of Higher Education, fostering student mobility and internationalisation at home. We aim to provide opportunities for intercultural understanding and self-development under the principle of 'students helping students'.

ESN UK works in the interest of international students who are spending parts of or their entire formal education at a Higher Education Institution in the UK, UK students who spend parts of or their entire higher education at a Higher Education Institution abroad, and those who cannot access a period abroad. We are working on a volunteer basis in 15 Higher Education Institutions in the UK through our local associations ('sections'). All the sections of ESN UK together help over 10,000 exchange, full-degree international, and local students every academic year.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or would like to know more about International Student Perspective UK, please contact liaisonoffice@esnuk.org.

Otherwise, if you would like to know more about ESN UK, please contact hello@esnuk.org.

www.esnuk.org



Erasmus Student Network
United Kingdom