

Gendered work? Notes on gender and study behaviour at a Technological University

Dr Marian Hurley, Marketing & International Business
Deirdre Casey, Academic Learning Centre



Context and rationale

What's happening?

- Crisis of 'engagement'? (If reported, then real?!)
- Redefinition of the meaning and/or practice of the 'role' of student?
- Rising attrition, etc.
- Lecturer/learner expectations misaligned?

Responses? Enhancements?

- Learning space (known)
- "Time management" (less known? An individual solution to a systemic problem?)
- (Self-)concept of studenthood (less known still?)

Is it reasonable to argue that “having enough ‘time’ has become one of the most stressful aspects of learning” (Bennett and Burke, 2018)?

If it is, do we know enough about contemporary students’ concepts of how much time there is and how it should be use (and when/how these ideas are formed)?

Do our experiences of studenthood colour our interpretation of what students should be doing, when and for how long in order to “be” students? What is the weight – or, indeed, the *value* – of our subjective interpretations?

“The way that we think about **time** implicitly determines our assumptions about self and others. Ideas about others’ – and indeed our own – **capability** in a field hinge on **assumptions** about their/our time” (Bennett and Burke, 2018).

Temporalities of engagement?

If a “role descriptor” consists in a definition of designated tasks to be completed at designated times (usually in designated venues), can we use learners’ subjective temporalities of study to understand why behaviours we observe may not match with *our* expectations for the fulfilment of the “role descriptor”?

Assuming they do, we need to learn about current students' concepts of, responses to and utilisation of:

- in-lecture time (time and venue defined and agreed);
- autonomous study time (time defined; venue undefined and interpretable); and
- interstitial (liminal?) study time (time designated but not defined; venue undefined)?

Is gender a factor?

- Some indications that it is.
- Some correlation between male gender identity and lower levels of time expended on study and related tasks.
- Time periods devoted to study appear to be far more circumscribed.
- Whose issue is this? Students'? Faculties? Universities? Specific parts of the university sector?

Who did we speak to and how?

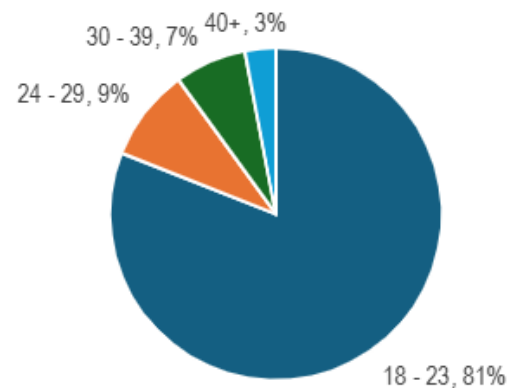
All-student survey

- n=390
 - Cork + Kerry
 - UG and PG
 - All faculties represented
-
- Quantitative
 - Qualitative

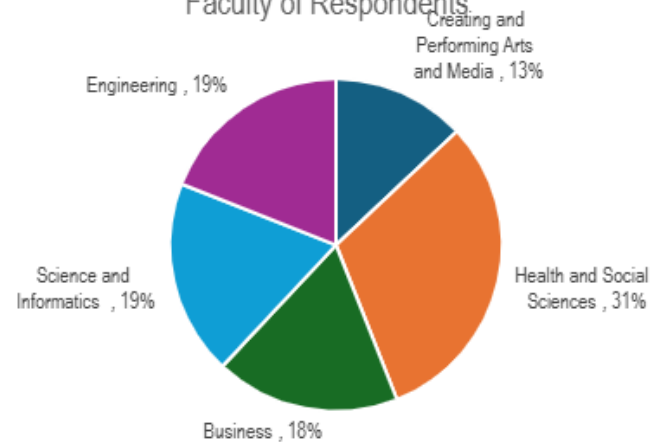
Interviews

- n=19
- Cork + Kerry
- UG and PG
- All faculties represented

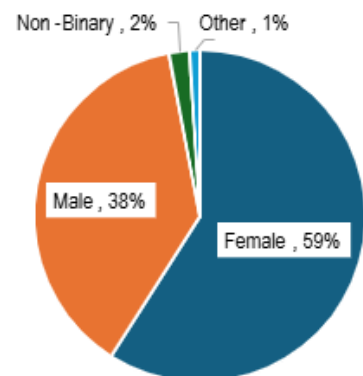
Ages of Respondents



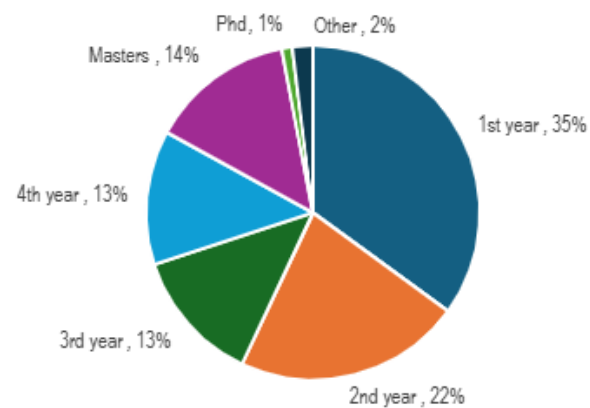
Faculty of Respondents



Gender Identity of Respondents



Year of study of Respondents



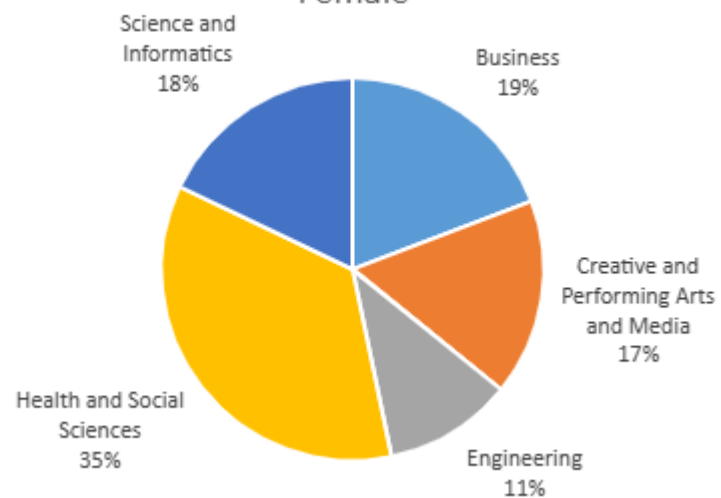
**All-student
survey**

N = 390

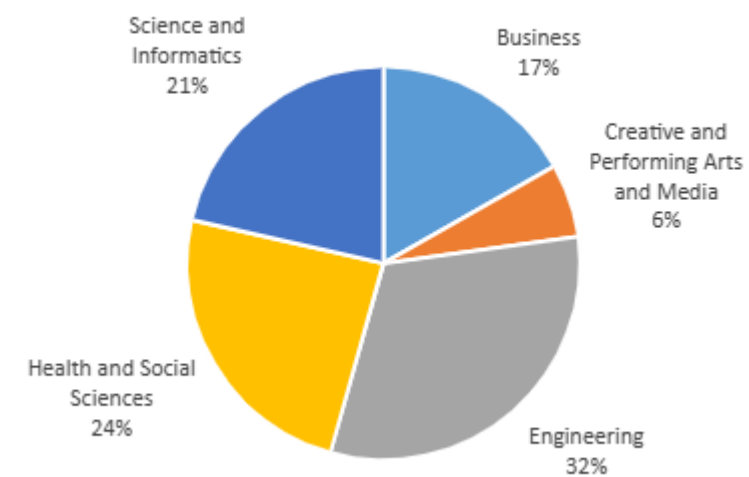
Preliminary Findings and Insights

36 Question survey, n = 390

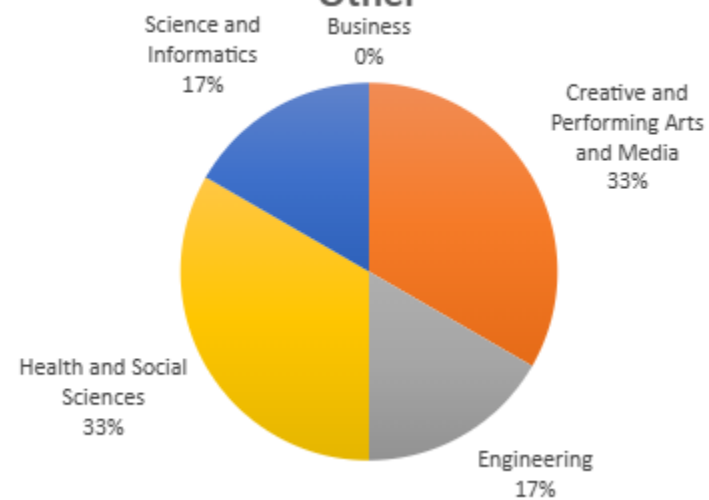
Female



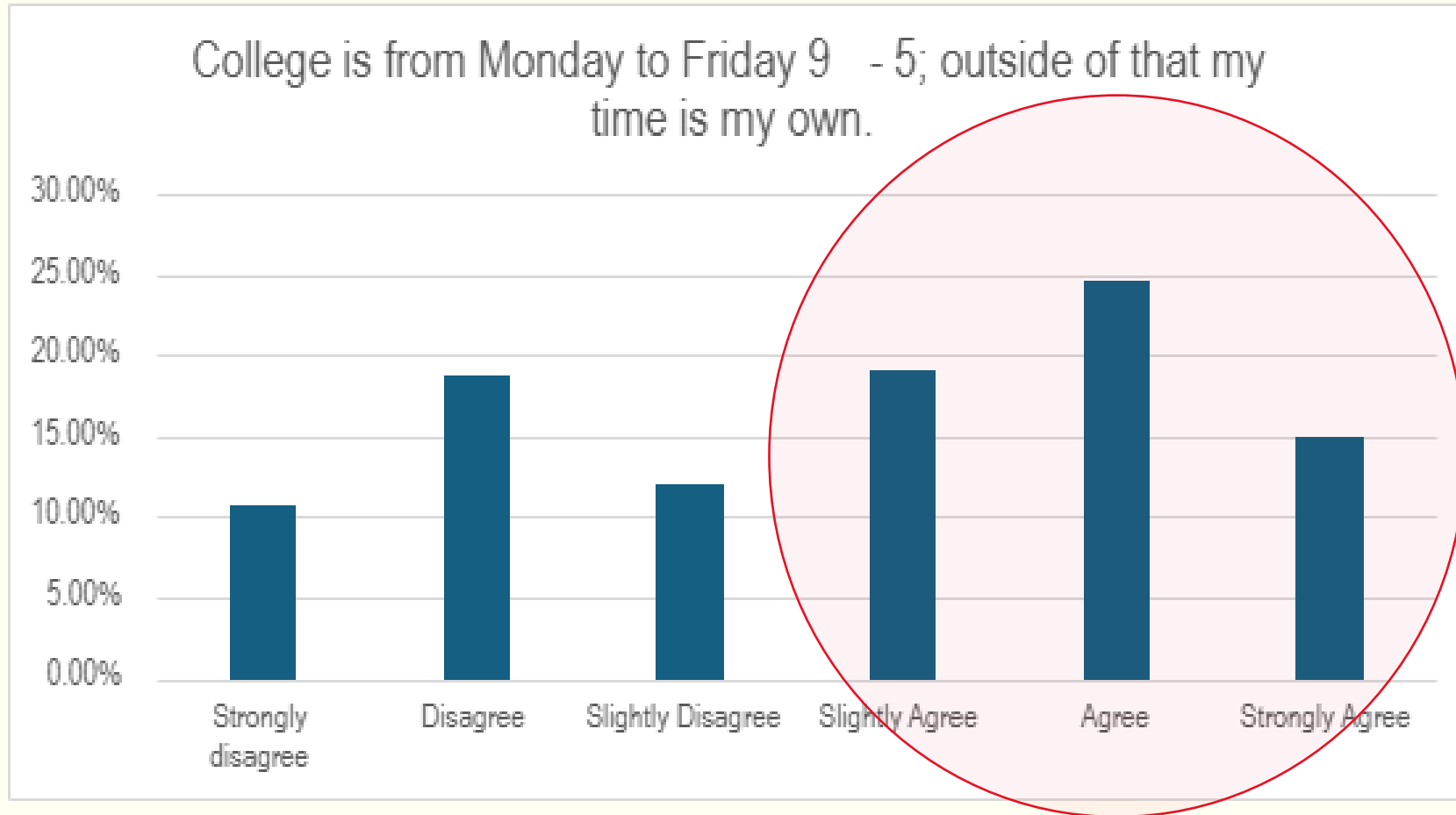
Male



Other



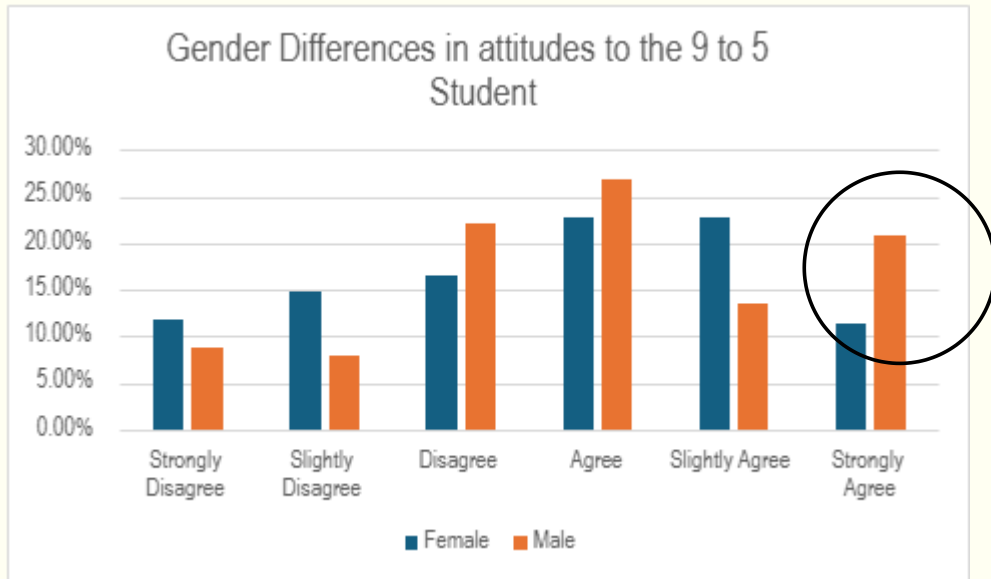
Attitudes to college work at evenings and weekends



58.46% of students agree to some extent with this statement

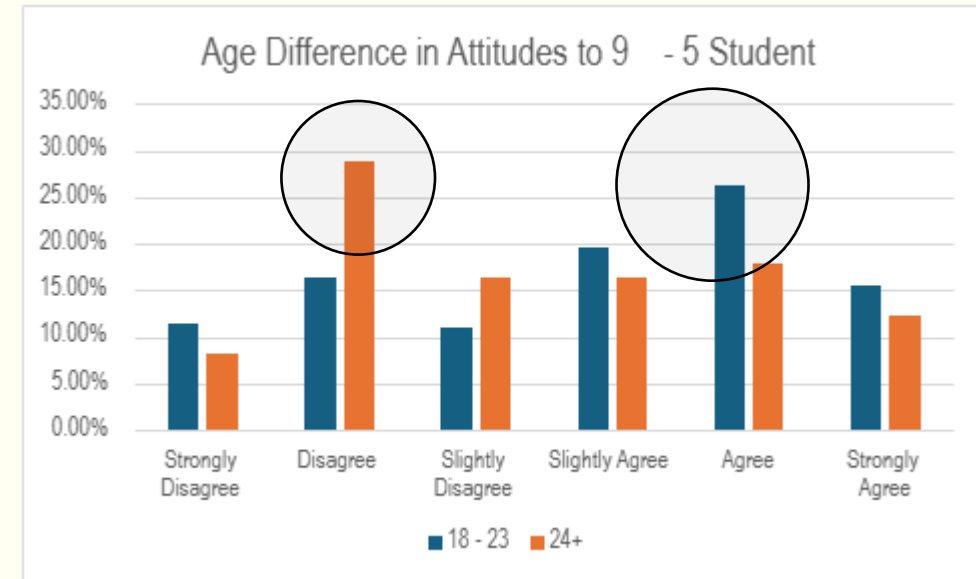
There are some demographic variations

Gender



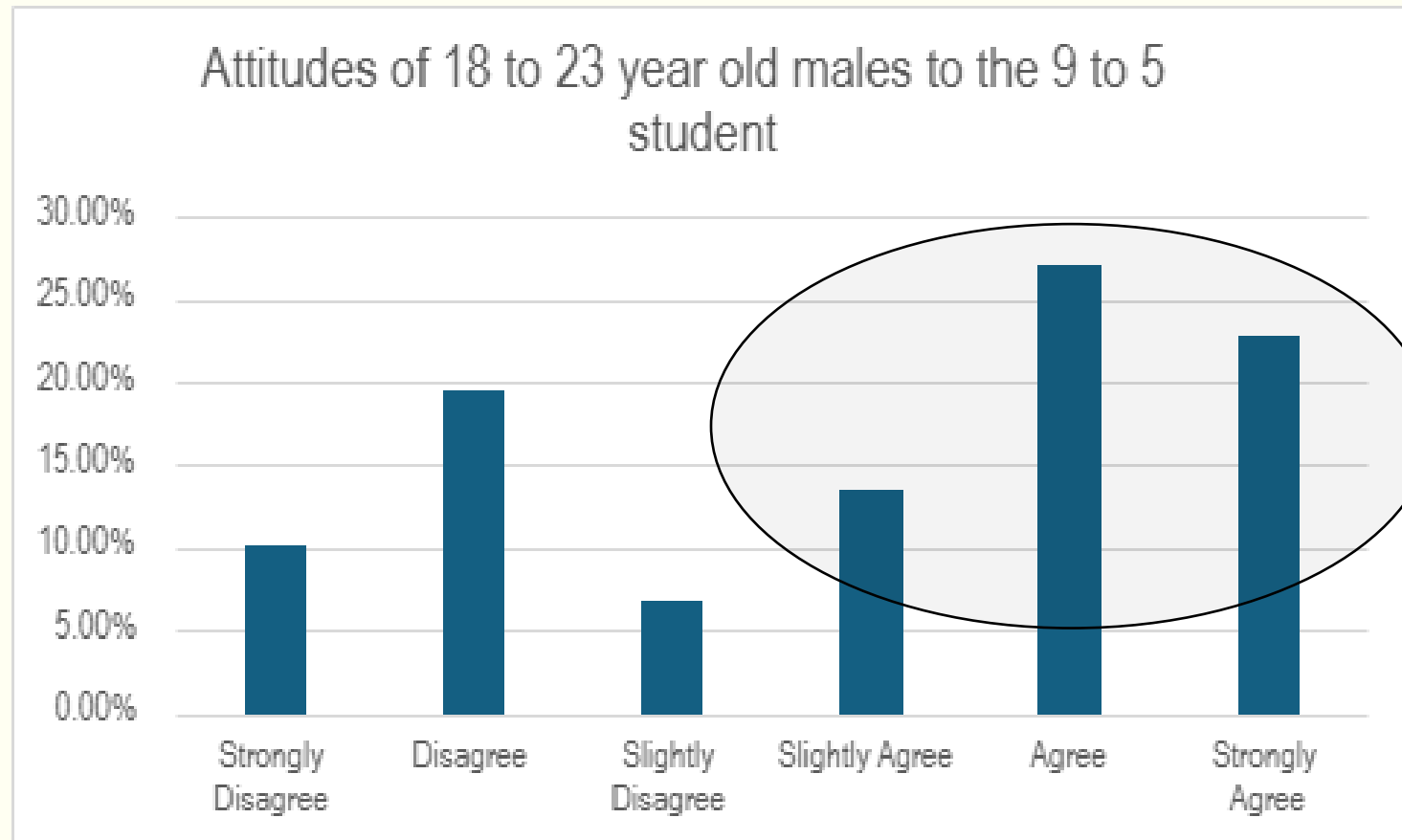
$p=0.0075$. Statistically significant difference

Age



$p=0.101$. Not statistically significant. Small numbers of older respondents

What about 18-23-year-old males?



63.56%
agreement

When I don't attend a lecture, it is usually because...



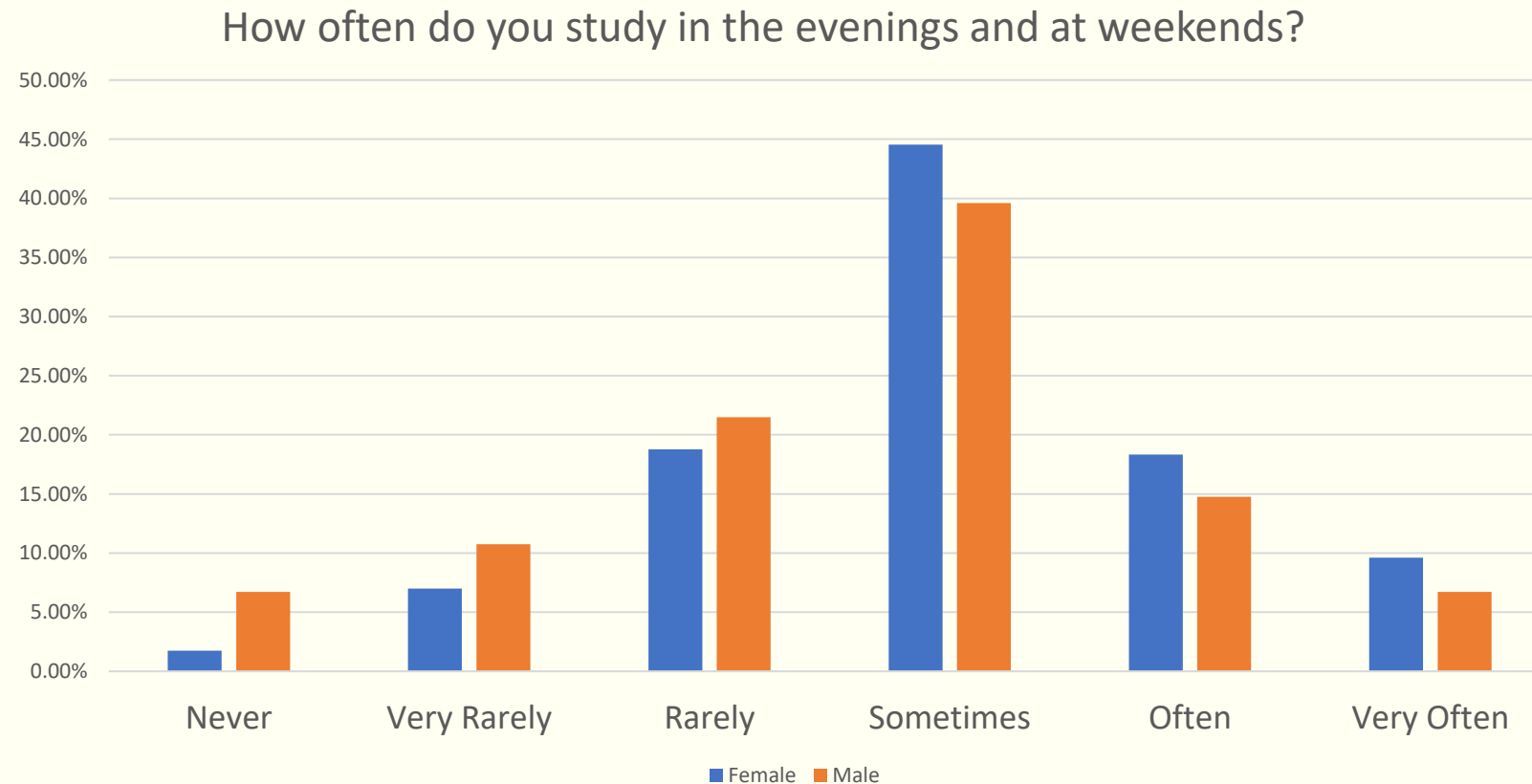
Some statistically significant differences in reasons for missed lectures

Females more likely than males to miss lectures due to feeling unwell.

Females more likely than males to miss lectures due to caring for family members.

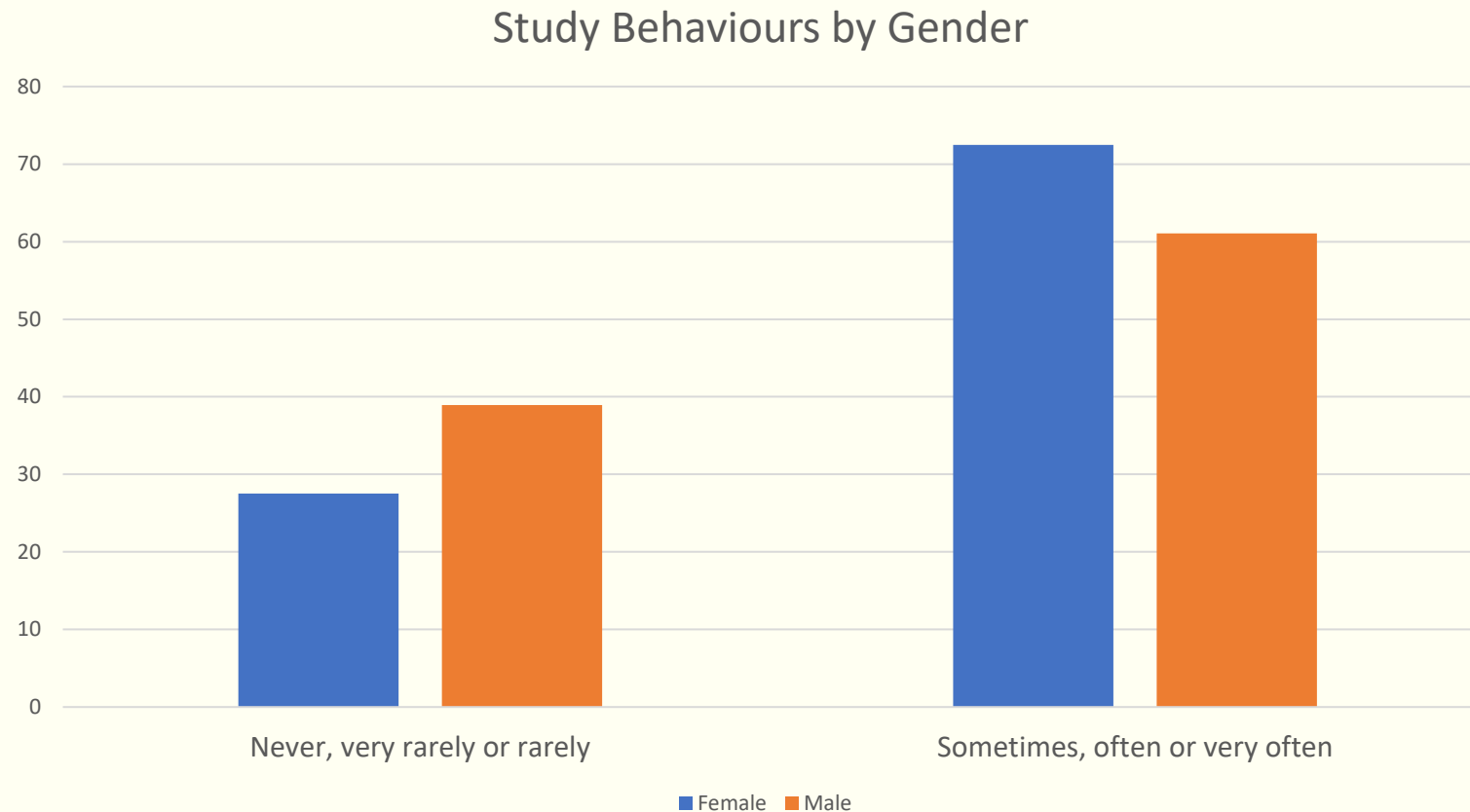
Differences in study behaviours

How often do you study in the evenings and at weekends?



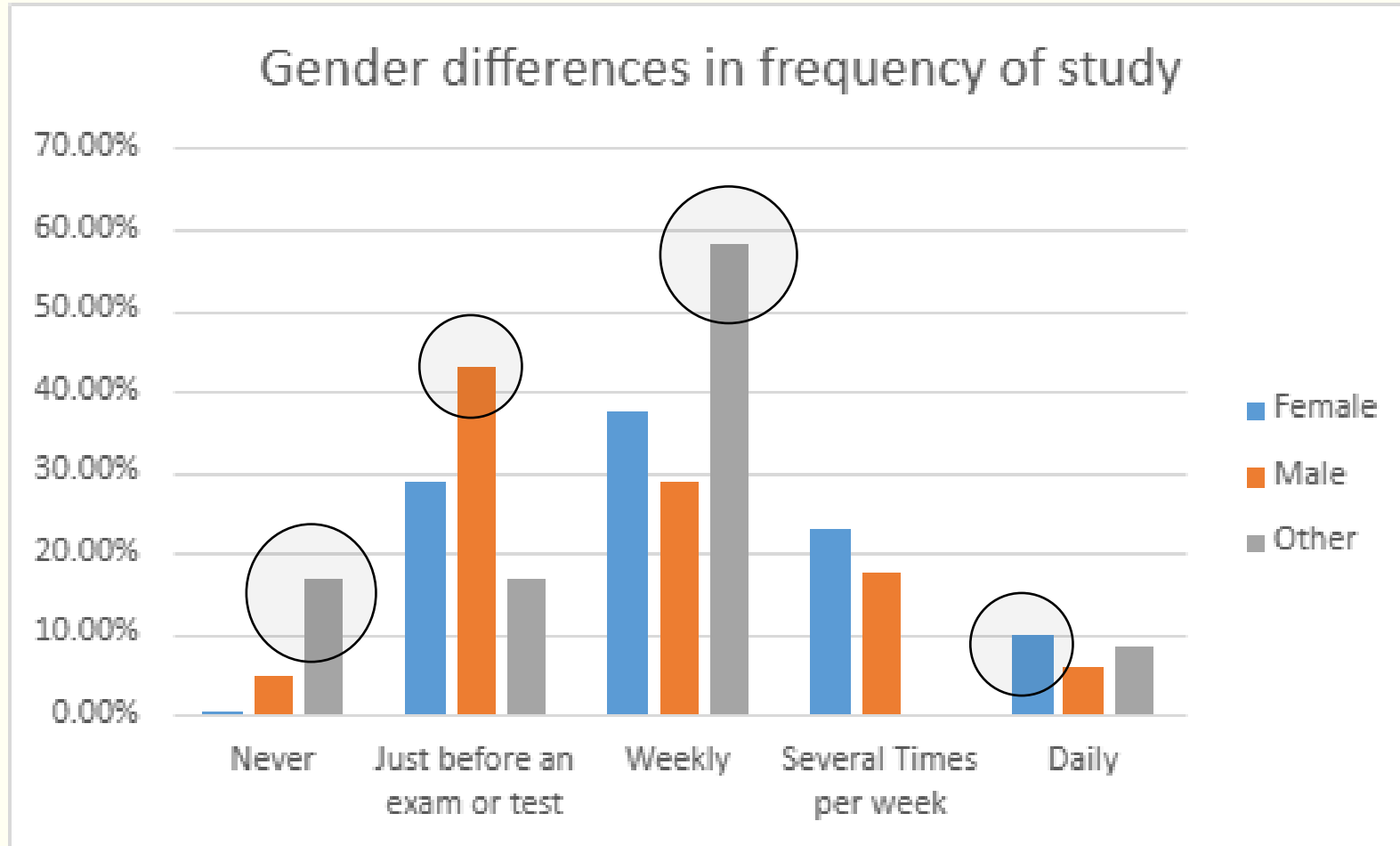
Making the differences easier to see

How often do you study during evenings and weekends?



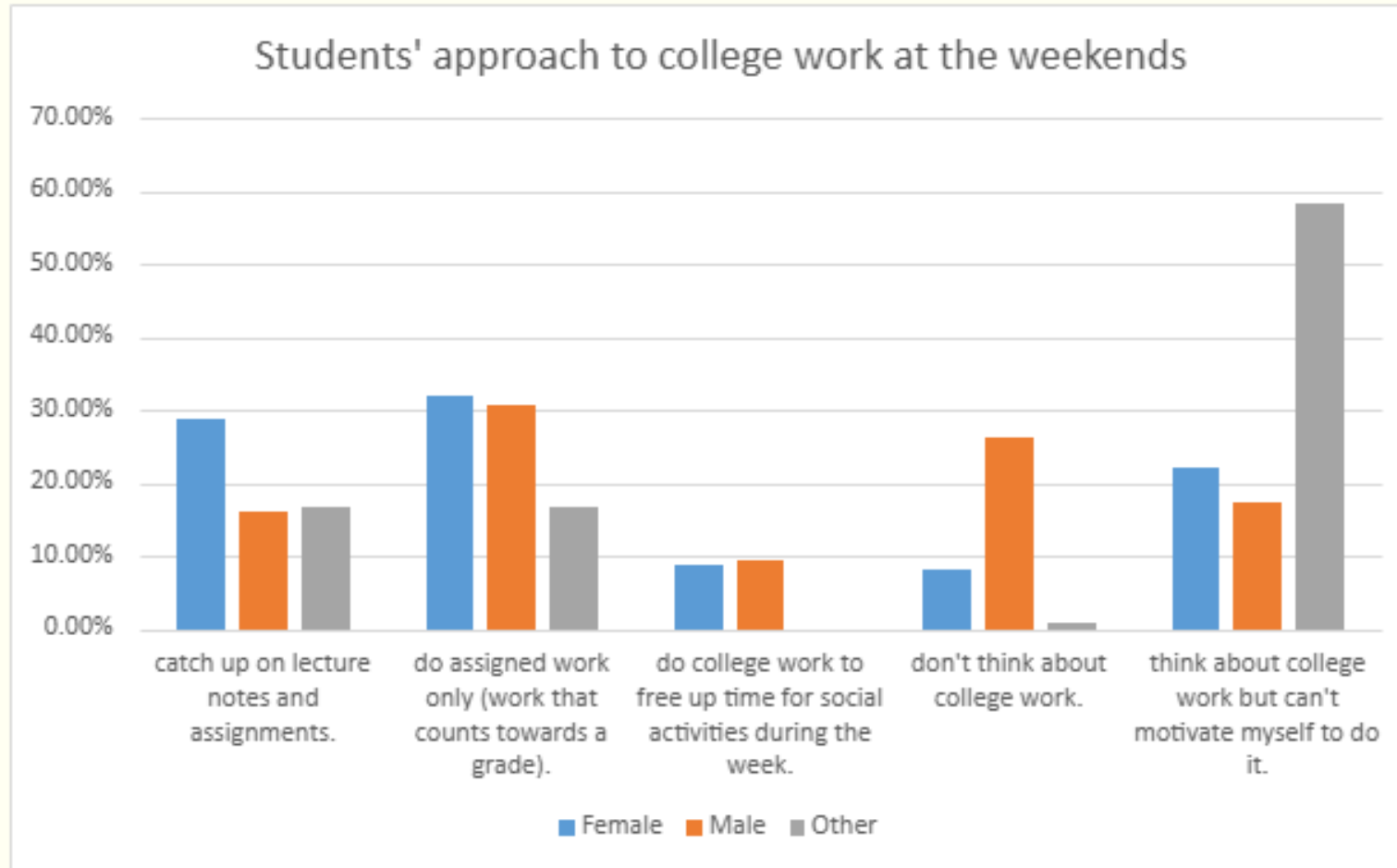
P = 0.027

How often do you review lecture notes or resources outside of class hours to reinforce your learning and prepare for assessments?



- Males more likely to only study before an exam or test.
- Females most likely to study daily or several times per week.
- Students of other gender identities are much more likely than male or female students to report that they never study (caveat: small number of students).

Are differences in approach to doing college work at the weekend gendered?



- Male students are by far the most likely to not think about college work at the weekend.
- Students who have a gender identity other than male or female are **much** more likely to think about college work and be unmotivated to do it (caveat of small numbers).

P = 0.0000135

Other challenges/trade offs



25% of respondents commute for more than 1 hour each way to college. (Blind spot: we didn't include an even longer option)



Paid employment has not impacted on my studies: 58.2% of students are on the **disagreement** side of this scale.



Which factors influence your decision to work (or not) on study or assignments during the evenings or weekends? 'Need for Rest' most common answer with 73% of students including this choice. Followed by deadlines (70%) and work commitments (58%).



Some initial indications that perhaps students are also trying to fit their college friendships into the 9-5.

Why is the "occupation" of student construed differently across gender identities?

What is unique about the male-identifying TU student?

- Are there added, novel, or unseen pressures? Life metrics? Unstable identities? Ruptured sense of time and temporality?
- Is it possible that male-identifying students have more strongly internalised change dating from pandemic era?
- Are we unable to access insight from our demographic standpoint?
- Or, are gender roles simply static? Do female-identifying students still carry added burdens of emotional and support labour and greater illness loads?

Limitations and next steps

- TU students only to date;
- No input from lecturing or PMSS staff;
- Limited number of students identifying outside the binary;
- Limited insight into nature of female caring duties and illness;
- Limited insight into root of highly transactional approach from male-identifying students.

**A shared or a unique experience?
Paths forward? Or tectonic shifts?**