

March 2021

The Psychology Zone (psychology21.imascientist.org.uk) ran from 1 to 26 March and was funded by **the British psychological society (BPS)**.

The Zone featured 25 psychologists from a broad range of psychology-related fields. 11 of these reported as being members of the BPS.

Key activity figures

	Psychology Zone	March 2021 IAS average
Schools	18	22
Students logged in	896	896
Students active	79%	83%
Psychologists	25	28
Questions asked	554	458
Questions approved	272	218
Answers given	657	609
Psychologist comments	117	68
Student comments	12	12
Live chats	46	56
Lines of live chat	12,207	13,868
Average lines per live chat	265	246
Votes cast	439	429

Psychologists

25 psychologists created profiles. They included:

- **Ellen Smith**, psychobiology PhD student at Northumbria University
- **Alex Baxendale**, educational neuropsychology PhD student, Bangor University
- **Lisa Orchard**, senior psychology lecturer, University of Wolverhampton

Students

896 students from 18 schools across the UK logged into the Zone.

71% of active students were from target schools: 66% from underserved schools and 8% from widening participation schools.

Live chats

46 live chats took place: 39 were school classes booked by teachers, 5 were additional chats, open to all the students in the Zone, and 2 were for prospective A-level students to find out more about studying psychology at A-level.

There were 4 live chats where teachers asked questions on behalf of their students. On 1 occasion, 5 classes were observing the chat. Therefore, the number of students reached will be higher by about 200.

On average, 5 psychologists attended each chat.

School activity

Students from 18 schools across the UK participated in the Zone. In addition to live chats booked by teachers, there were Thursday evening chats for the students and their families.

School	Active users	Chats attended	Chat lines (total)	Chat lines (per user)	Questions approved
Valley Park School, Maidstone (U)	138	7	706	5	6
Middlesbrough College, Middlesbrough (U)	118	4	554	5	126
Kingsley Academy, Hounslow	92	5	627	7	70
St Oscar Romero Catholic School, Worthing (U)	85	3	596	7	36
Tonyrefail Community School, Porth	78	3	680	9	20
Dinglewell Junior School, Gloucester (U)	44	3	640	15	0
Hornsey School for Girls, London (WP)	35	2	228	7	3
Great Baddow High School, Chelmsford (U)	32	2	315	10	5
John F Kennedy Catholic School, Hemel Hempstead (U)	21	1	196	9	0
Furness Academy, Barrow-in-Furness (WP/U)	19	1	230	12	1
Harris Garrard Academy, Erith *	18	5	181	10	3
Easthampstead Park Community School, Bracknell	12	1	40	3	0
The WREN School, Reading	8	2	76	10	0
St Joseph's Catholic School, Salisbury (U) †	5	1	63	13	0
The Basildon Upper Academy, Basildon (WP/U)	3	1	21	7	2
Kenmont Primary School, London (WP) †	1	4	137	137	0
South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Salisbury (U) †	1	1	73	73	0
Rosecliffe Spencer Academy, Nottingham *	0	1	21	21	0

* In these chats teachers typed questions on behalf of their students.

† Students from these schools attended open chats only.

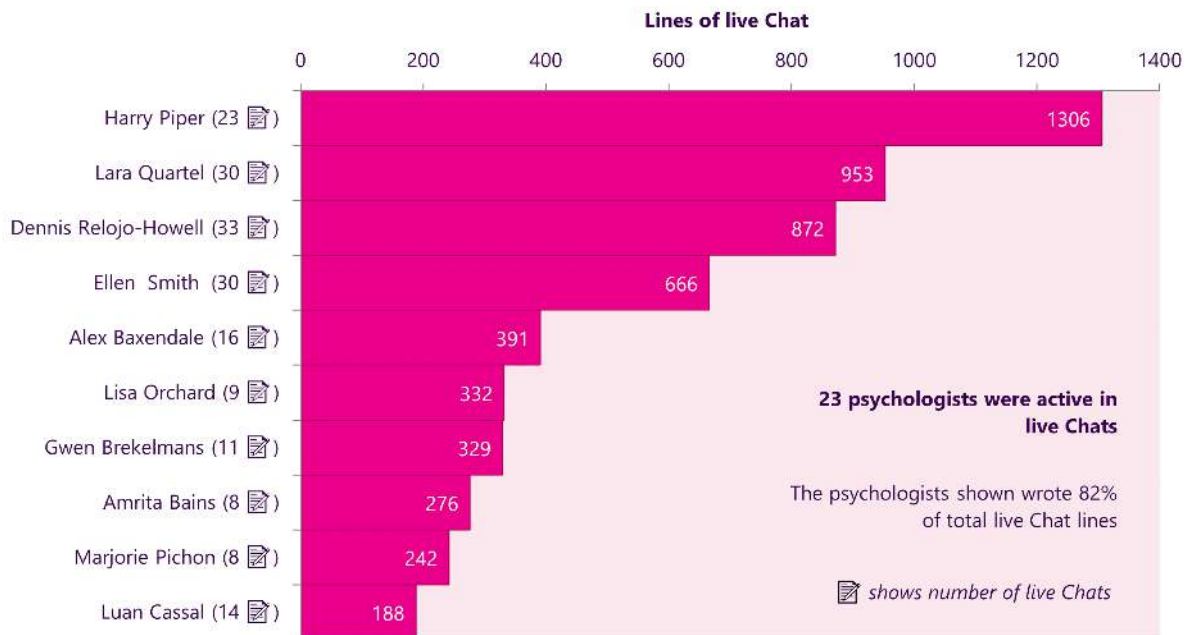
We want to increase the participation of under-represented groups. Find out what we mean by under-served (U) and widening participation (WP) schools, and how you can support us in working with more of these: about.imascientist.org.uk/under-served-and-wp

Psychologist activity

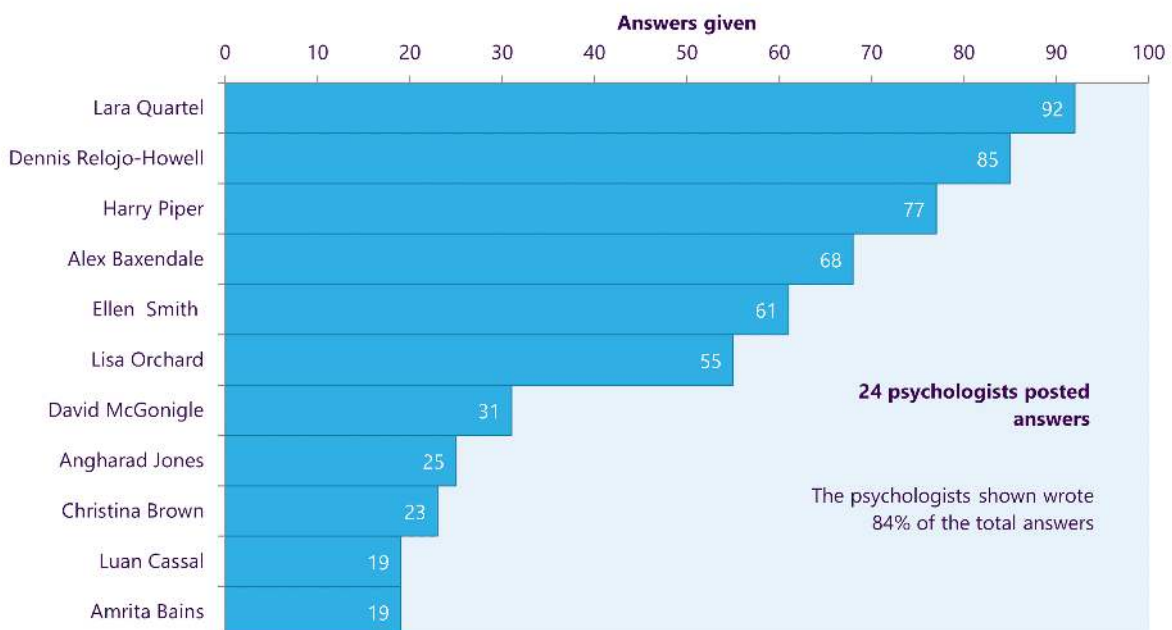
24 of the psychologists interacted with students, writing 6,843 lines of live chat, and providing 657 answers to 272 posted questions. See all participating psychologists at:

psychology21.imascientist.org.uk/psychologists

10 most active psychologists in live Chats



10 most active psychologists in posting answers



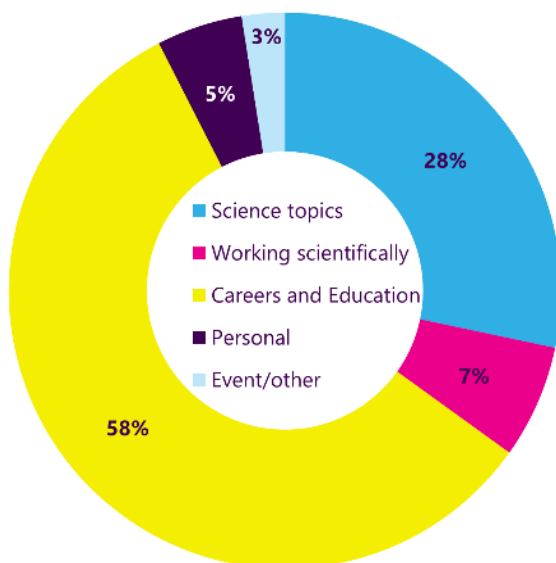
Live chats

The word cloud below demonstrates what students and psychologists talked about in live chats. The bigger the word, the more frequently it was used.



Questions in Ask section

The chart below shows a breakdown of questions students sent to the psychologists. Examples are coloured by category.



does being bilingual have any affect on the way our cognitive processes work?

What is a social norm?

do you think the pandemic has offered further insight into how people behave?

Is a psychologist ever off duty? Do you ever find yourself analysing people without even realising

What is your aspiration to achieve in your career life and why?

What advice would you give to students who want to study psychology?

What are your tips for staying mentally active in lockdown?

Good engagement

Some students sought very practical advice about studying, and specialising in, psychology:

Student: what advice would you have for a-level students wanting to become psychologists?

Ellen (psychologist): I'd say find a topic that you're really interested in and then you'll find it a lot more enjoyable and easy to do! At uni I really loved criminal psychology, eating disorders and nutritional psych so I chose options that fitted in with that

Student: before going to uni, how did you know what you wanted to study to enjoy the topic more?

Ellen: I really enjoyed psychology at A Level and didn't even know that the area I work in now existed! I just knew that psychology in general was super interesting to me, then at uni I learnt more about the different areas

Student: perfect thank you, how long was you at uni before knowing what you wanted to do?

Ellen: I was picked to do a summer internship in my 2nd year at uni and decided then that was definitely what I wanted to do. I'd already done a couple of option modules that were relevant and then continued in my final year of my degree

There's no pressure though to know exactly what you're interested in or want to study. I know others who did completely different things in their undergraduate degree to what they do now

Student: thank you!

This class were moved by this psychologist's advice on dealing with stress and anxiety:

Teacher: What advice would you give to children who feel worried about life, for example, will we really get to back to normal?

Alex (psychologist): Taking a deep breath and allowing yourself the time to make mistakes - being able to forgive yourself for mistakes is a huge way to get over anxiety

Teacher: Our whole class just gave you a big round of applause. Thank you for the advice.

Students were also curious about what the psychologists did outside of work, to relax and look after their own mental health.

Student: What do you all do to maintain your mental wellbeing in your free time?

Dennis (psychologist): I don't do any work on weekends. I love gardening. I love getting my hands dirty with soil and plants. That's my form of self-care.

Harry (psychologist): I rarely work late and never work weekends - lots of martial arts, other exercise, reading and gaming

Luan (psychologist): I enjoy outdoors time. I keep in touch with friends and family, even if online nowadays. I also like to cook, but I keep a balanced alimentation, with many fruits and vegetables. I do regular psychotherapy and exercises. And books and games when it's rainy. :)

Ellen (psychologist): I love cooking! And have a lot more time for it at the moment when I'm working from home. I also really love eating out and meeting friends when we're allowed to

Many students asked about issues surrounding mental health.

Student: What is the biggest mental health problem that you have found is most common in adulthood?

Lara (psychologist): great question! Depression and anxiety are probably the most common, though it depends on how you define mental health problem - are we talking diagnosis or symptoms that affect us all at some point? We all as young people and adults face issues of depression, anxiety, stress and even some slight psychosis issues too.

Student: I'm talking about specific diagnosis that are given, and also is self-diagnosis of common mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, common in adulthood as well?

Lara: ok sure! So yes, depression and anxiety have the highest prevalence diagnosis wise. It's also probably the most prevalent mental health issues in young people too. And yes, a lot of people to self-diagnose, which has its good and bad points. [...]

Have you heard of 'health anxiety'? a lot interesting stuff around over self diagnosis and placebo in some respects too

Student: I have heard of it, that's where my initial thoughts on the negative side of self-diagnosis came from. Thank you for answering my questions.

On Wednesday 24 March an extra evening chat ran specifically for students who would be studying, or who were considering studying, psychology at A-level. There were excellent questions from both students and teachers:

Student: What kind of jobs or variety of jobs can you get with this Alevel?

Dennis (psychologist): My first job after finishing my psychology degree was at a call centre and travel blogger. I carried on doing these to fund my master's degree in the Philippines. And then at 25, I became a psychology lecturer – that was my first ever job which is psychology-related.

Ellen (psychologist): It depends if you go onto study it at university or not, if you do there's so many different areas that you can go into! Psychology graduates have lots of transferable skills which means your career options are huge

Lisa (psychologist): Psychology is well-loved by all employers so it is really diverse. It really gives you an appreciation for how people work together, so can be applied to anything.

Teacher: If I wanted to support my Year 11s about to study Psychology A-Level, what would you recommend I suggest they should do/read over the summer?

Dennis (psychologist): Read books and watch psychology videos on YouTube. The British Psychological Society has some interesting videos on their channel. There are also psychology programmes you can listen to on the radio such as 'All in the Mind' which is in partnership with the Open University.

Lisa (psychologist): Looking over the BPS website (British psychological society) website will be a good start. They can get a good feel for all the different areas.

Student: Hello, what are the major topics learnt at psychology A level?

Lisa (psychologist): You will get a good feel for different psychology topics. So some social psychology, some biopsychology, some research methods. A broad range.

Student: Great! thank you, is psychology a good thing to study even if you don't study it further after A level? could it still be helpful into any other jobs?

Lara (psychologist): for sure! It's good for a lot of jobs as its quite a diverse subject being both science and essay based - so critical skills and science background

Psychologist winners

Students voted each week for their favourite psychologist to be named Psychologist of the Week.

The first and third Psychologists of the Week were:

- **Lara Quartel**, PhD student at Kingston University London
- **Harry Piper**, PhD student at Bangor University



The second Psychologist of the Week was also crowned Zone winner, with the most votes at the end of the Zone was:

- **Dennis Relajo-Howell**, founder of Psychreg digital magazine, psychology YouTuber, and PhD student at the University of Edinburgh

As Zone winner, they receive £500 to spend on further public engagement projects.



"Thank you for enabling me to see my roles as psychology blogger and as resilience researcher from a fresh perspective.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made the chats possible: the team behind *I'm a Scientist* (especially the moderators), the schools and the teachers, and the British Psychological Society.

My prize money will be donated to a school in a slum in the Philippines, because I fiercely believe that one of them could be a scientist."

You can read their full statement at

psychology21.imascientist.org.uk/2021/03/30/a-thank-you-from-your-winner

Feedback

I just wanted to say thank you very much for this amazing opportunity for students to speak with psychologists and have their questions answered. Each and every psychologist has been so interesting to speak with! [...] It's been such a great chance for students to see how psychology is used beyond the classroom "in the real world" and I've really enjoyed it myself too.

Teacher



Dr Lisa J. Orchard
@drljorchard

This month's @imascientist has now come to an end. I have really enjoyed doing all the chats and would strongly recommend to anyone thinking about having a go. Very rewarding experience!

Thank you all for taking time out of your day to answer our questions and discuss psychology with us, it has been interesting to hear about your experiences and lives. So many of my questions have been answered. Really appreciate it!

Student

It's been absolutely incredible! These chats are the highlight of my day.

Harry (psychologist)



Class 11
@Class11DJS

We are enjoying a fascinating chat with scientists in the Psychology Zone with 'I'm a Scientist Get me Out of Here' this afternoon as part of our British Science Week(s). Amazing questions from the children! @imascientist @ScienceWeekUK

Can I also say a huge thank you to the scientists [...]. You've been a great inspiration for many of my students.

Teacher



MC6 Psychology Team
@mbropsychology

Thank you to the Psychologists who took part in @imascientist today, speaking to our A-level and BTEC L3 Psychology students; we learned a lot! #BSW21 @BPSOfficial

Many thanks for the opportunity to participate in *I'm a Scientist*. I found that it reignited my love for psychology.

Rai (psychologist)

