

June 2022

The **Psychology Zone** (psychologyj22.imascientist.org.uk) ran from 6 June to 1 July 2022 and was funded by the **British Psychological Society**.

The Zone featured 16 psychologists working across a variety of fields and applications. They connected with 269 students from across the UK. 245 students (91%) actively participated by writing Chat lines and asking follow-up questions.

Teachers advised us that exam season impacted the time available for enrichment activities, reducing the activity in the Zone.

Key activity figures

	Zone
Students logged in	279
Students active	88%
Schools	15
Psychologists	16
Live Chats requested	27
Live Chats taken place	23
Lines of live Chat	3,889
Average lines per live Chat	169
Questions asked	19
Questions approved	18
Answers given	69
Votes	189

Who took part?

279 students from 15 schools across the UK logged into the Zone and connected with 16 psychologists. 26 psychologists were invited to take part but 10 declined the invitation.

Impressively, 94% of active students were from priority schools: 77% from underserved schools and 20% from widening participation schools.

A total of 189 votes were cast by students. The winning psychologist with the most student votes was **Jake Sallaway-Costello**, Assistant Professor in Public Health Nutrition at University of Nottingham.

Activity

27 live Chats were booked. 23 took place.

The remaining 4 Chats booked were cancelled. All schools were chased and invited to rebook.

On average, there were 18 students in a class. It is also common for students to share login details or computers during live chats. Therefore, the number of students engaged will be higher.

Students asked 19 follow-up questions of which 18 were approved and 1 was a duplicate.

School activity

Students from 15 schools across the UK participated in the Zone.

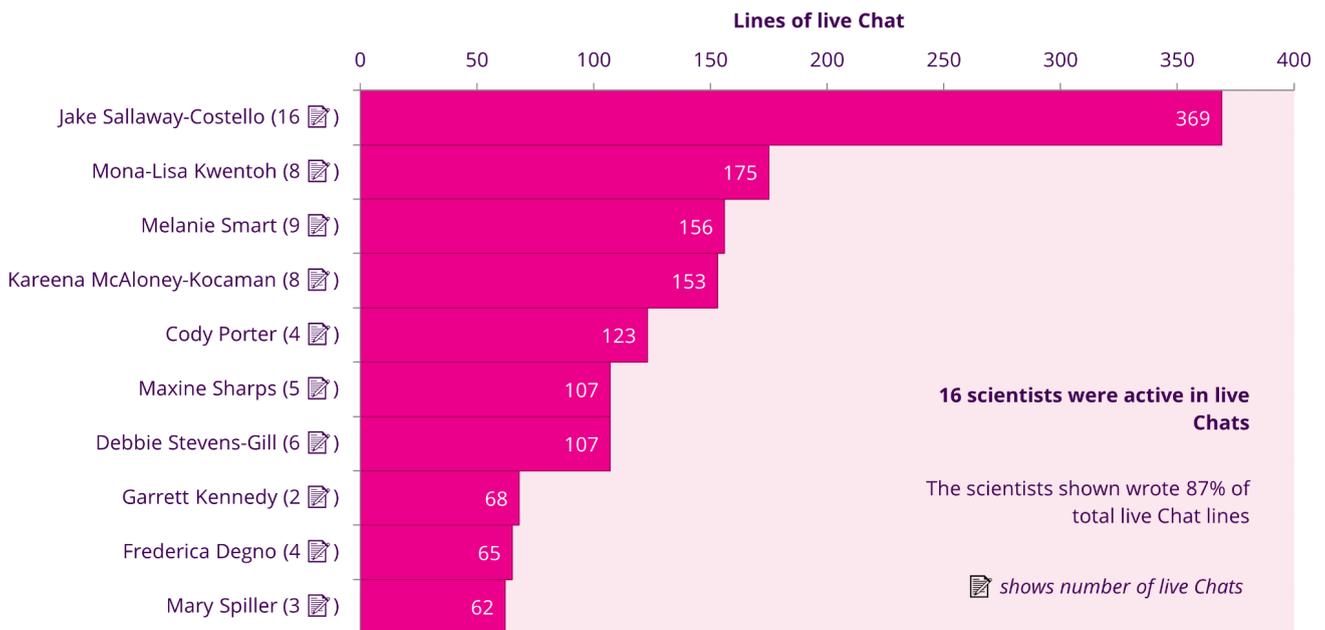
School	Students logged in	Active users	Chats attended	Chat lines (total)	Chat lines (per user)	Questions approved	Votes
South Wilts Grammar School, Salisbury (U)	54	49	4	210	4	2	47
Dover Grammar School for Girls, Dover (U)	46	43	4	204	5	3	32
Ashlawn School, Rugby (U)	37	36	2	140	4	7	34
Cleeve School, Cheltenham (U)	24	22	2	111	5	0	11
Hillhead High School, Glasgow City (WP)	22	19	1	194	10	3	8
Howell's School, Cardiff	17	16	1	279	17	2	10
Chenderit School, Banbury (U)	20	15	1	78	5	0	10
St Roch's Secondary School, Glasgow City (WP)	12	11	1	163	15	0	7
Biggar High School, South Lanarkshire (U)	10	9	1	17	2	0	7
Etone College, Nuneaton (WP/U)	10	9	1	73	8	0	9
Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, Reading (WP)	6	7	1	47	7	0	6
Aylesbury High School, Aylesbury (U)	4	5	1	61	12	0	1
Sir Harry Smith Community College, Peterborough (U)	4	5	1	63	13	0	3
Dagenham Park CofE School, Dagenham (WP)	6	5	1	46	9	0	3
Arbroath High School, Angus (U)	3	3	1	42	14	1	1

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

During the Zone the psychologists interacted with students by writing 1,592 lines of live Chat, and providing 69 answers to 18 posted questions. On average, 3 psychologists took part in each live Chat.

10 most active scientists in live Chats



10 most active scientists in posting answers



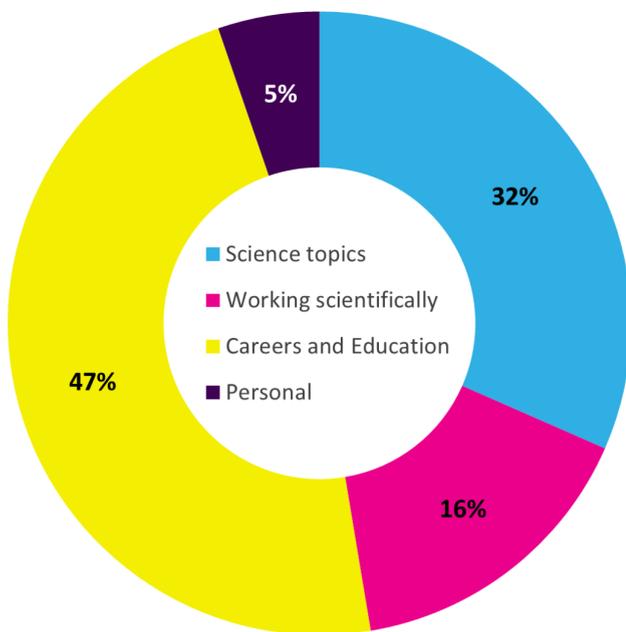
Live Chats

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 an analysis of questions students sent to the psychologists. Questions are coded into overarching categories. The examples are coloured by category.



- How do you tell if someone is a narcissist?
- Have you seen a trend in the UK where certain areas tend to have better mental health, or is it fairly equal?
- Is free will real or just an illusion?
- When you go to peoples houses do you look around to learn about their lifestyles?
- How long did it take to gain your qualifications for the job you are currently working in?
- When did you start to take an interest in psychology?
- What do you find the most rewarding aspect of your job?
- Do you eat bread?

Good engagement

Understanding how psychology relates to everyday life is important to build students' science capital¹.

Student 1: How has studying psychology helped you in real-world situations?

Debbie (psychologist): It's made me much more empathic in stressful situations, and I keep finding better and better ways to communicate with people.

Frederica (psychologist): It makes you more aware of others' feelings, and this gives you an advantage on the way you react.

Information about psychologists' careers and education is useful to show students the variety of opportunities and what they need to do to get there.

Student 1: What was the route you had to take qualifications/ experience-wise to be able to work your occupation

Kareena (psychologist): I did an undergraduate BSc degree in social psychology, then worked for a year and a half as an assistant psychologist, then did a PhD in Social Psychology, and a whole series of research jobs, before moving to Glasgow to be a lecturer. But as well as that I did lots of volunteering - in health settings and youth work to build up my CV

Student 1: Would you say it has been easy to find work with the field of social psychology? Many people use lack of demand as a deterrent against studying psychology (which I totally don't agree with...)

Kareena (psychologist): Ooooh that is a good question. I think there will always be a demand for psychologists, but that there are many more options available to psychologists trained to be practitioners (health, clinical, forensic, sport and exercise, counselling, etc). Social psychology is not an applied discipline, so as a psychologist I am a researcher and academic, not a practitioner. I have however never, thankfully! had too much trouble in finding work, because understanding social processes, and social psychology is fundamental to a lot of those other disciplines. Social psychology is a core area that the British Psychological Society requires all psychologists to study at some point of their undergraduate degree

¹ about.imascientist.org.uk/student-impact

Subject specific questions about psychologists research and work can help generate interest in the topic.

Student 1: What are the damaging effects of communicating by social media?

Maria (psychologist): Really good question. I think many people think that communicating by social media is necessarily harmful. It's not. There's also research suggesting it can be a positive thing, particularly for those who feel isolated and marginalised.

Student 1: What other things has your research shown?

Maria (psychologist): All sorts of things, but in relation to tech, I have shown that our brains respond differently to work related notifications (e.g. email notification) compared to social things like mobile texts. Of course lots more research is needed.

Student 1: That's so interesting

Student 1: What experiments are you doing on peoples' eating behaviour?

Maxine (psychologist): I'm doing lots of different things. I've been working on one where we worked with children who are very fussy eaters and we made a story book to help other children as fussy as them

Student 1: how did they overcome being fussy eaters?

Maxine (psychologist): These children have autism and are very fussy, so they will only eat very specific foods, such as pringles, or custard creams. They may not overcome their fussy eating but children can overcome it

There are lots of things to try, like offering rewards through trying different foods, trying things multiple times and you can learn to like them etc

Connecting with psychologists over shared interests or opinions can help students see psychologists as “normal people” like them and build a rapport with them.

Student 1: What are your favourite psychology-related TV shows/ films

Jake (psychologist): I liked "A Dangerous Method", a movie about Freud and Jung starring Keira Knightley! But lots of people didn't like it, it got bad reviews. I'm big into horror films and I like how some of the newer ones are exploring psychosocial construction of illness. Candyman (2021) was great at this!

Student 1: I loved Candyman!

Jake (psychologist): Did you see the new one? I actually told my students at the university to go and watch it as part of our module on health promotion. Horror films have historically portrayed people with mental illness as dangerous and malicious, but new horrors are starting to explore social influences on ill-health and how health inequalities contribute to mental illness risk.

Student 1: No, I haven't seen the new one yet - I definitely will now! I completely agree about the portrayal of mental illness within entertainment media - is this something you get to delve into when studying?

Jake (psychologist): It's great to use film analysis and critique to explore psychological ideas - this can be a really helpful way of making sense of and remembering complex theory! When I was university we had an assignment in which we had to explain all the elements of psychodynamic theory using only scenes from Oscar-winning movies... it definitely helped remembering them!

Student 1: That's so interesting - do you happen to remember some of the scenes you chose ? I challenged myself to try and get through every single Oscar-winning movie I could source at the start of lockdown, so I'd love to view from a different perspective

Jake (psychologist): I'm afraid it was a while ago! Apart from that example from The Aviator I'm a bit stuck. A few years ago though, I worked with a group of students to make a list of psychologically-inspired movies about health. At Christmas, I ask my students to watch one as their winter homework task. Then they come back in January and we talk about what theories they can see in the movies :)

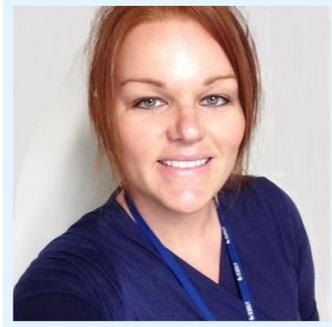
Psychologists of the Week

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

The Psychologists of the Week were:



Garrett Kennedy, Principal Lecturer & Head of Psychology at University of Wolverhampton



Melanie Smart, Clinical Child Psychologist



Debbie Stevens-Gill, Senior Lecturer at University of Wolverhampton

Psychologist Winner

The overall winner, with the most votes at the end of the Zone was:

- **Jake Sallaway-Costello**, Assistant Professor at University of Nottingham

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



"Getting involved in this and talking to students just starting their scientific journey, was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with the ideas and spirit of curiosity that made me want to be a scientist. It was also a great way to develop my skills in public communication, and explain my work in ways which are meaningful to people beyond the academic community."

You can read their full statement at ias.im/459.194

Feedback

Thank you to all psychologists, the chat was very informative.

Teacher

Thank you psychologists, it's been amazing chatting to you all and I hope we speak again.

Student



Jake Sallaway-Costello
@JakeySC

A great experience taking part in @imascientist 🎓 Highly recommend for other academics to connect to the future of STEM 👍



Child Psychologist
@DrMelanieSmart

It's been lovely to contribute to "I'm a scientist, get me out of here..." for the last three weeks. Thrilled to be joint "Psychologist of the Week" this week. Some brilliant questions and great attitudes. My future colleagues, no doubt! @imascientist



Miss Martin Chem
@chem_miss

S2 DYW got to ask some Psychologists questions about their jobs while they answered in real time! Very interesting to hear about a type of science not studied in school 😊

Thank you so much, this was so fun.

Student