

June 2023

The Psychology Zone (psychologyj23.imascientist.org.uk) ran from 6 to 30 June and was funded by the British Psychological Society.

The Zone featured 17 psychologists working in industry and academia - looking at everything from whether learning martial arts changes the way our brains work, why some people find mathematics difficult, to how perception and emotions can affect the way people see and hear things. They connected with 316 students from across the UK. 272 students (86%) actively participated by writing Chat lines and asking follow up questions.

Key activity figures

	Zone	June 2023 average
Students logged in	316	493
Students active	86%	90%
Schools	8	16
Psychologists given access	23	34
Psychologists active	17	28
Chats booked	23	40
Chats took place	16	27
Lines of Chat	2,384	6,966
Average lines per Chat	149	233
Follow up questions asked	68	155
Follow up questions approved	61	120
Answers given to follow up questions	215	343
Psychologist comments	10	17
Student comments	0	2

Who took part?

316 students from 8 schools across the UK logged into the Zone and connected with 17 psychologists.

93% of active students were from priority schools: 76% from underserved schools and 62% from widening participation schools.

A total of 210 votes were cast by students. The winning psychologist with the most student votes was **Chloe Tasker**, who researches the use of pupil dilation to measure human emotions.

Activity

23 Chats were booked. 16 took place.

Out of the remaining 7 Chats booked, 5 were cancelled and in 2 cases, the school did not attend and did not give notice. All schools were chased and invited to rebook.

Students asked 68 follow up questions of which 61 were approved and sent to scientists. Duplicate questions (that scientists had already answered) were not sent again, with the student being directed to the previous answer and invited to comment and ask additional questions.

Votes 210 345

School activity

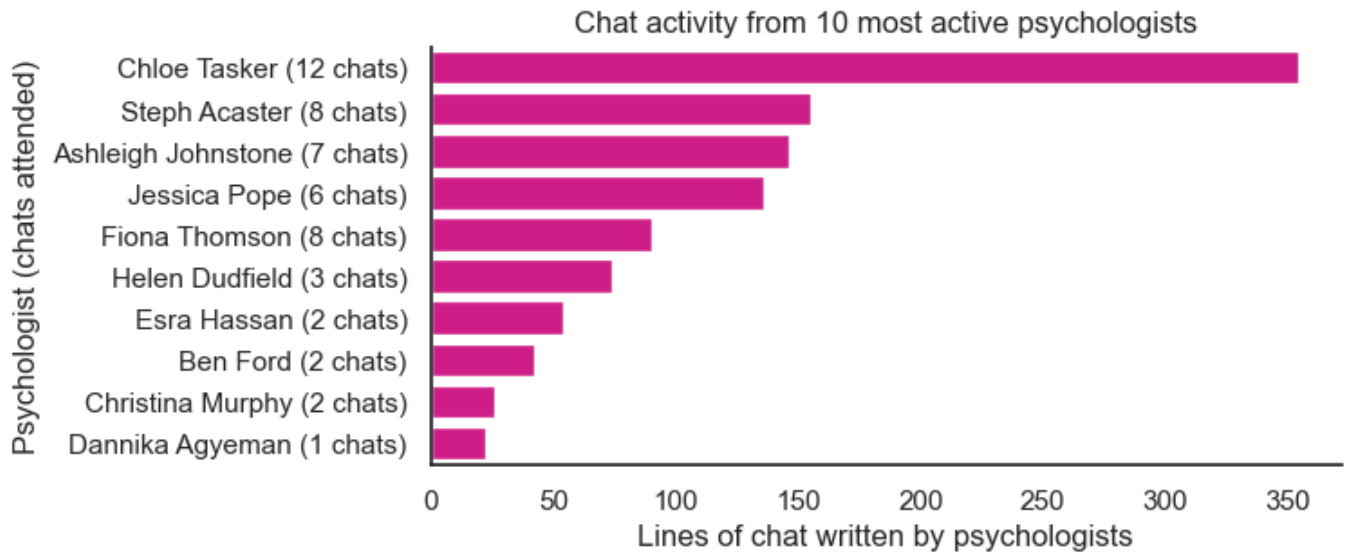
Students from 8 schools across the UK participated in the Zone.

School	Students logged in	Active users	Chats attended	Chat lines (total)	Chat lines (per user)	Follow up questions approved	Votes
Middlesbrough College, Middlesbrough (WP/U)	118	102	5	320	3	50	72
Littlelover Community School, Derbyshire (U)	52	51	3	287	6	0	46
South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Wiltshire (U)	43	35	3	181	5	4	32
St Dominic's High School, Antrim (WP)	29	26	2	94	4	2	26
Furness Academy, Cumbria (WP/U)	23	19	1	72	4	1	4
Cantonian High School, Cardiff	22	18	1	144	8	1	13
South and City College, West Midlands (WP)	15	14	1	41	3	3	14
Exeter College, Devon (WP)	14	7	1	33	5	0	3

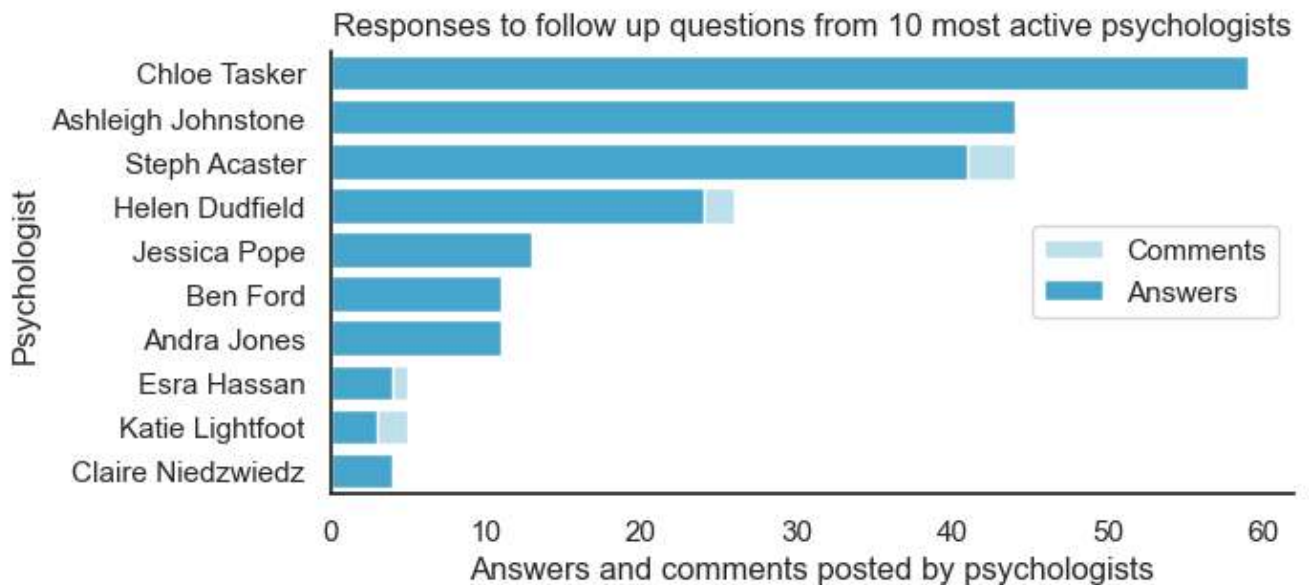
We want to increase the participation of under-represented groups. Find out what we mean by under-served (U) and widening participation (WP) schools, and how you can support us in working with more of these: about.imascientist.org.uk/under-served-and-wp

Psychologist activity

Psychologists interacted with students by writing 1,145 lines of Chat, and providing 215 answers to 61 follow up questions. On average, 3 psychologists took part in each Chat.



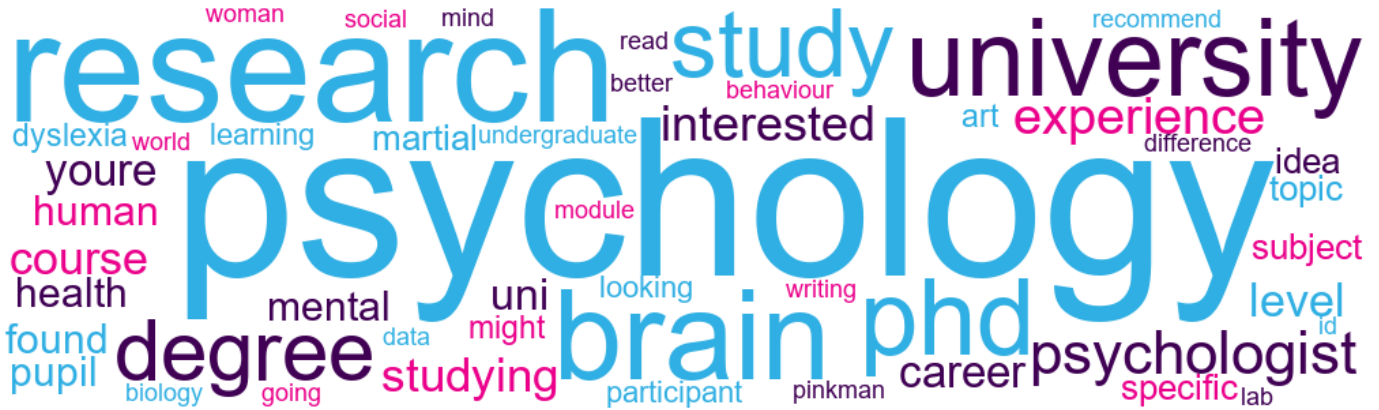
The psychologists shown wrote 96% of the lines of chat in the zone. The average psychologist attended 3 chats, and wrote 72 lines.



The psychologists shown posted 100% of the answers, and 80% of the comments in the zone. The average psychologist posted 13 answers, and 1 comments.

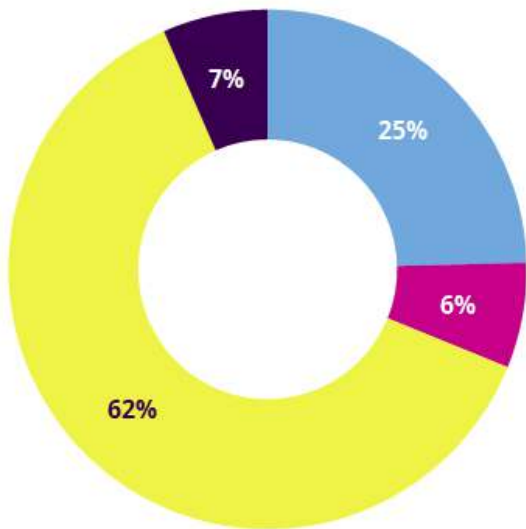
Chats

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



Follow up questions

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.



● STEM topics ● Working scientifically
● Careers and education ● Personal ● Event/Other

- Is there a higher mental toll for celebrities than other people in relation to stress and anxiety?
- Do you believe dreams have a deeper meaning?
- Why did you choose eye dilation? And was the camera used to track the pupil expensive? Did your university fund this or did you have to buy this yourself?
- What was the most difficult obstacle you had to overcome to get to where you are now?
- How did you figure out what field to go into and a job which correlates with it?
- Why is the study of psychology so important to our society?
- How did you figure out what field to go into and a job which correlates with it?
- Whats your favourite music artist to study to?

Examples of good engagement

Ever wondered what actually goes on behind the scenes of a psychologist's work? The topics that are not discussed and are kept out of the media spotlight? Chloe provides some insight for the students in her response.

Student 1: What is the side of psychology no one hears about?

Chloe (scientist): Very good question! Lots of people think psychology is just about becoming a therapist - there's so many things that include psychology like criminal cases, advertisements, selling products in shops and more!

We often wonder what our bodies do when we are awake.... but what about when we are sleeping? Here, Steph gives helpful reasons for all of that sleepy movement!

Student 2: Why do our bodies sometimes move while we sleep?

Steph (scientist): Are you thinking about sleepwalking or the smaller movements we make like rolling over in bed?

Student 2: Smaller movements like rolling over in bed

Steph (scientist): Sometimes they happen in the 'less deep' stages of sleep, where we semi-consciously shuffle to stay comfy. Other times there's random muscle twitches that can make us move - the brain is always active so it can trigger small movements. But, for most people, there's a 'block' to stop us walking around or hurting ourselves

When work makes up a significant part of your life, can our analytical minds creep over into our personal roles as friends and confidants? Jessica, Steph and Chloe reveal all.

Student 3: Do you find yourself over analysing all your friends?

Jessica (scientist): I do, and they hate it! I have to try very hard not to do it, but sometimes it can be helpful in helping them if they've had a bad day

Steph (scientist): Generally no. But there are some things I think about a lot, e.g. at the moment I think a lot about sensation seeking and sensory overload, and I thought about that with a friend yesterday when she was having a hard time in the hot weather!

Chloe (scientist): Haha good question! I don't think so, but when I say I'm a psychologist everybody always says 'oh no are you going to analyse me now?!'

Getting a foot on the career ladder can often be quite a daunting task... but volunteering can be great at helping gain experience, meet new people in the same field and building skills. Jessica, Steph, Ashleigh and Chloe provide some advice to this student.

Student 4: Do you have any advice on getting work experience in psychology?

Jessica (scientist): Don't be afraid to just ask! My first work experience place I walked in and asked if they had any volunteer positions. I ended up being there for 3 years! :D

Steph (scientist): What sort of experience are you thinking of? Lots of different experiences can be relevant to psychology, so keep looking out for things. Some tasks can even be done online, be creative in what you're searching for!

Student 4: Anything to do with forensics / forensic psychology?

Steph (scientist): Have you looked for any charities that might do work relating to forensic psychology? It can be tricky as a student to get work experience with certain populations (e.g. if you were interested in working with prisoners) but you could look at other 'ways in' e.g. fundraising or working with a relevant charity.

Steph (scientist): Once you're 18, you can also often find research that needs participants, so you can get to know a bit about what it's like to participate in research projects!

Ashleigh (scientist): There may be lots of suggestions about things like volunteering with charities, etc, but like Steph has said, there's lots of things that can be relevant to psychology! There's value in any experiences you can get - even things like working in a shop can teach you a LOT about communicating with people and working with different people :)

Chloe (scientist): Reach out, and don't be scared to! Definitely try and get something specific that you're interested in because it's always great to get the chance to know if you really enjoy it or not

Student 4: Thank you!

Understanding and safeguarding mental health is a topic of interest to many students. A student is keen to understand how psychological studies contribute to a better understanding of mental health disorders and Steph and Ashleigh highlight how this knowledge can benefit awareness and treatment.

Student 5: How does psychology contribute to understanding and addressing mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder?

Steph (scientist): Different researchers and theorists will come at it from different directions. There are clinical trials to assess different medications, cognitive theories about mental processes, psycho-social which looks at the effects of the environment and other people...

Ashleigh (scientist): I think it can do a lot! For example, biological psychology can tell us a lot about some of the underlying neuroanatomy and chemical changes in the brain behind these conditions which can really help our understanding

Student 5: What about behaviour and cognitive do they play an important role in understanding these conditions?

Ashleigh (scientist): Good question! I think that all of the different perspectives help us get a good holistic view of these conditions - so they help us take everything into account, rather than just focusing on one small aspect

Psychologists of the week

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

The scientists of the week were:



Chloe Tasker, researches the use of pupil dilation to measure human emotions



Erska Hassan, studying dementia and its effects on the brain



Ben Ford, lecturer who makes use of technology like eye-tracking and virtual reality

Winning psychologist

The overall winner, with the most votes at the end of the Zone was **Chloe Tasker**, who researches the use of pupil dilation to measure human emotions

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



"I have had an amazing time during the zone. Thank you to all of the students who asked great questions, to the other psychologists who I have had some great conversations with, and to the BPS for funding the Psychology Zone.

I'm excited to put the prize money into the Women in STEM society at the University of Essex. Our society aims to advocate for diversity and inclusion in STEM, and provides an inclusive community for minority individuals in STEM on campus. We hope to set up a scheme for university students to volunteer their time to go to local schools and teach science lessons and perform experiments!"

You can read their full statement at [here](#)

Feedback

"It's always been one of my favourites. I've taken part in [other activities], but I'm a Scientist is the one I keep coming back to. It's such a great opportunity to read wider groups of students, but I also just really love the general idea and ethos of it. It's great to see the students getting excited about asking their questions!"

Ashleigh Johnstone, Psychologist

"Thank you so much chloe you really helped me out here"

Student

"Thank you very much, very helpful :)"

Student

"Thank you everyone for your questions! I will keep trying to answer as many as I can, and I'm very sorry if I didn't get to yours! Feel free to ask me questions outside of this chat over on the ASK page. It's been lovely talking to you all"

Chloe, Psychologist

"Thank you for such incredible questions! Please feel free to ask me any more questions directly"

Jessica, Psychologist