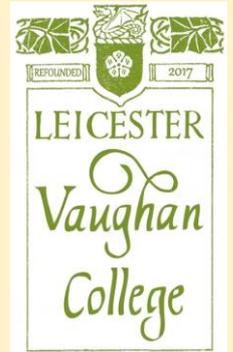


# **‘The impact of the pivot to online delivery on the experience and appreciation of face-to-face provision’**

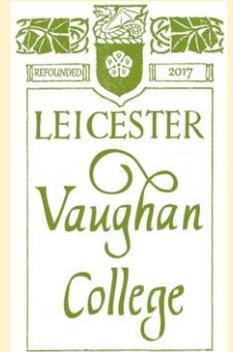
Drs Miriam Gill and Lucy Faire  
Leicester Vaughan College



# Outline of paper

- Why we think this research is necessary
- Research methods
- Initial findings
- Where we are going next

# 1. Why this research?



# Situating this research

The pandemic required a rapid and all-encompassing switch to on-line learning. Subsequent debate saw this shift as a positive model for future adult learning opportunities.

- Has the pandemic taught us more about the opportunities and problems of virtual learning?
- Does the context of the pandemic distort findings about virtual/ remote provision (both positive and negative)? Do adults 'love' learning online in a non-pandemic situation?
- What does it mean for virtual/ remote provision to be 'retained and developed as far as is appropriate but not further'? (Michie)
- Can we define where 'face-to-face teaching and learning remains crucially important for many aspects of learning'? (Michie)

# A moment of opportunity?

World Economic Forum Press Release in March 2022:

*‘As restrictions have been lifted, universities are moving back to in-person teaching. ... They should capitalise on knowledge gained from their online learning experience.’*

*The worst possible scenario would be for universities to introduce an institution-wide blended learning format or template - increasing workload but not quality.*

# Inequality persists

*Online teaching is often sold as a way to give students flexibility and accessibility, with everything a click away. But it also throws them back on their own unequally allotted resources. **One thing lockdown has revealed is how many students have no access to a computer or a quiet place to work at home.***

Joe Moran, 'What is a university now? Why face-to-face teaching is still valuable in a digital age', *TLS*, 2 October 2020, 4-5.

*The pandemic has made it abundantly clear that **students and their learning and living conditions outside lecture theatres are diverse and unequal**, prompting many conversations about educational and digital inequality. ..*

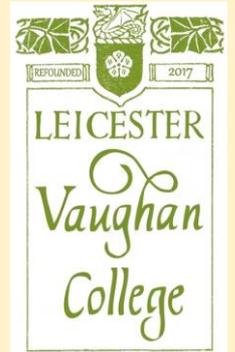
World Economic Forum Press Release in March 2022

# Face-to-face remains important

*‘[F]ace-to-face teaching and digital formats should not be played off against each other...**Digital teaching should be seen as a complementary means to further improve the quality of teaching, and the importance of face-to-face teaching should not be forgotten...**The lack of contact between lecturers and students leaves many gaps that cannot be "filled" online.’* Dr. Anne Grtner from Technische Universitt Dresden in Journal Psychologische Rundschau (Nov. 2021)

*We engage most intensely not with avatars or talking-head rectangles but with the physical presence of other breathing bodies. Why should teaching be any different? **Teaching is** not a commercial transaction but **an innately human act.*** (Moran, 2020)

## 2. Research methods



# Method of primary data collection

## Questionnaires:

- Two different questionnaires: one for **tutors** asking about their experience of teaching online; one for **students** asking about their learning experience during period March 2020-March 2022.
- Varied rather than representative sample of tutors and students. The graphs are just showing **trends** in our data rather than mapping statistical patterns
- Respondents were sourced either via social media (twitter/FB) or were approached directly by us
- So far we have **36** completed questionnaires
- **20** questionnaires by those studying and **16** by those teaching
- **Data collection methods promoted personal, reflective and situated responses.**

# Method of primary data collection - interviews

- Where respondents agreed to discuss their experiences further, they were given the opportunity to develop any points they made in more detail. This allowed for the nuance necessary to assess experience and appreciation.
- So far we have done **6** interviews, 5 with tutors and one with a student.
- The interviews are around 1 hour and were mainly recorded via Zoom.
- Transcriptions were automatically generated to aid further research.

## Questionnaires are divided into three parts:

- Background information:

- What course was being studied/taught (accredited/non-accredited)
- If accredited what level (HE level plus any other level)
- Age category (student questionnaire only).
- What kind of students were taught in terms of adult/mature status plus numbers in a session (in tutor questionnaire)
- How much prior experience of online teaching
- How many sessions delivered during the period

**Indicative Responses using Likert Scale** (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, no particular opinion/not relevant).

<b>In the student questionnaire (some examples)</b>	<b>In the tutor questionnaire</b>
I enjoyed learning online	I enjoyed teaching online
I felt able to participate fully in the online sessions	The students were happy to participate in my sessions
I found it easy to concentrate in online sessions	I was able to identify students who were struggling with the topic of the session
I felt I could interact well with my fellow students in online sessions	Discussions involving the students achieved a depth sufficient for the level of the course

## Written responses to more detailed questions, such as:

<b>Student questionnaires</b>	<b>Tutor questionnaires</b>
What do you consider to be the most beneficial aspects of online learning (for you)?	What aspects of online teaching did you enjoy?
Were there any aspects of face to face teaching which you missed during your online course?	Were there any aspects of face-to-face teaching which you missed?
Were there any aspects of your online learning experience which you think were an improvement on that of face to face teaching?	Did you learn new techniques to teach online and, if so, do you think these new techniques are useful in a face to face context?

# Profiles of respondents to date

## Students

### Mainly in 35-64 category

2 were 65; 17 were aged 35-64; 1 aged 21-34

### Majority were studying accredited courses

15:7 accredited v. non-accredited

2 studied both unaccredited and accredited courses

### Nearly all HE courses (BA/MA/Phd)

one was studying for a level 3 certificate and PG qualification, one for a certificate (unspecified), the rest all HE level

## Tutors

### Courses taught = mainly HE level

12 Tutors were teaching HE level courses (BA, MA, MSc, Phd, HE Cert)

3 Teaching other accredited courses (IGSCE, GCSE, BTEC, Access)

### Number of sessions taught online

Majority had taught more than 10 sessions

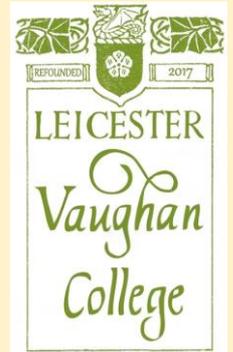
### Class sizes 1-250

5 had taught classes of 30+

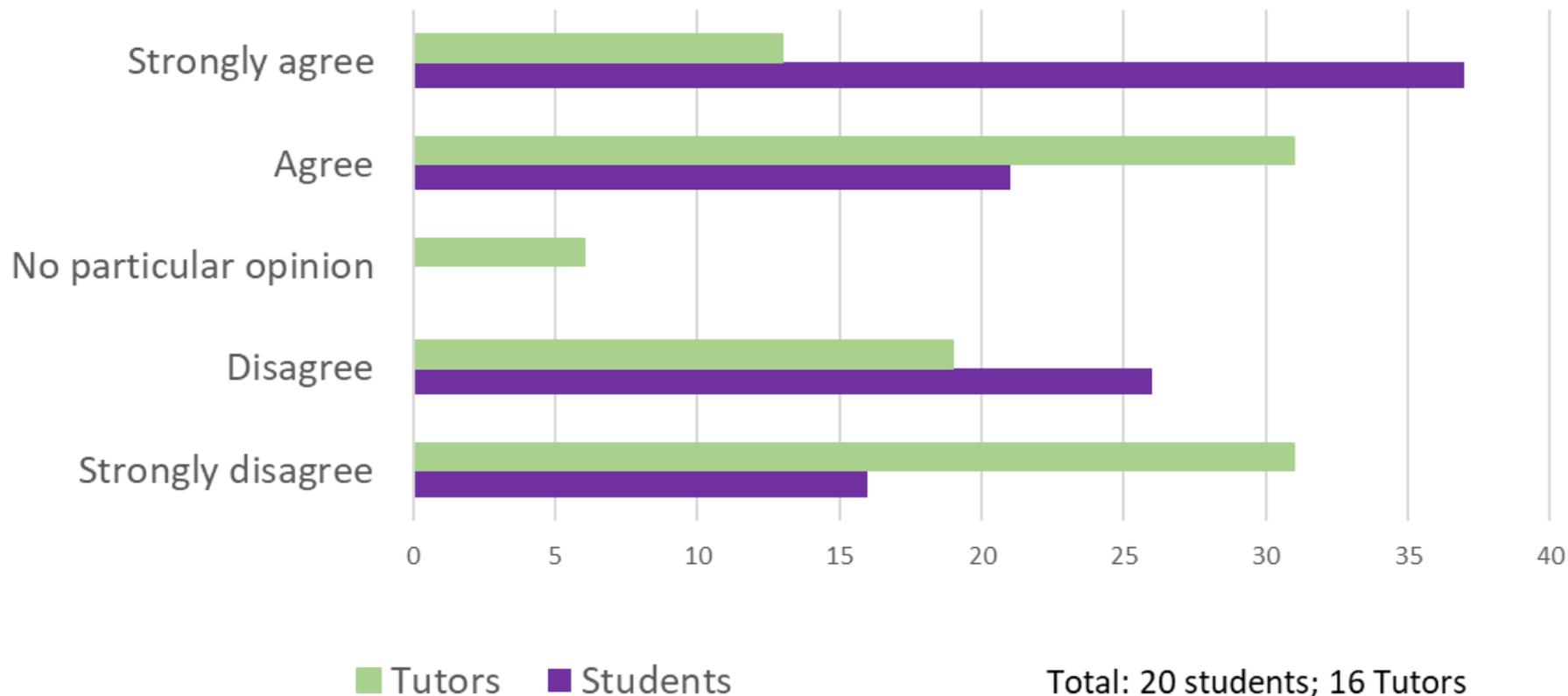
6 had taught classes of 15-29

6 taught groups of 10 or fewer (one teaching groups of 1-250)

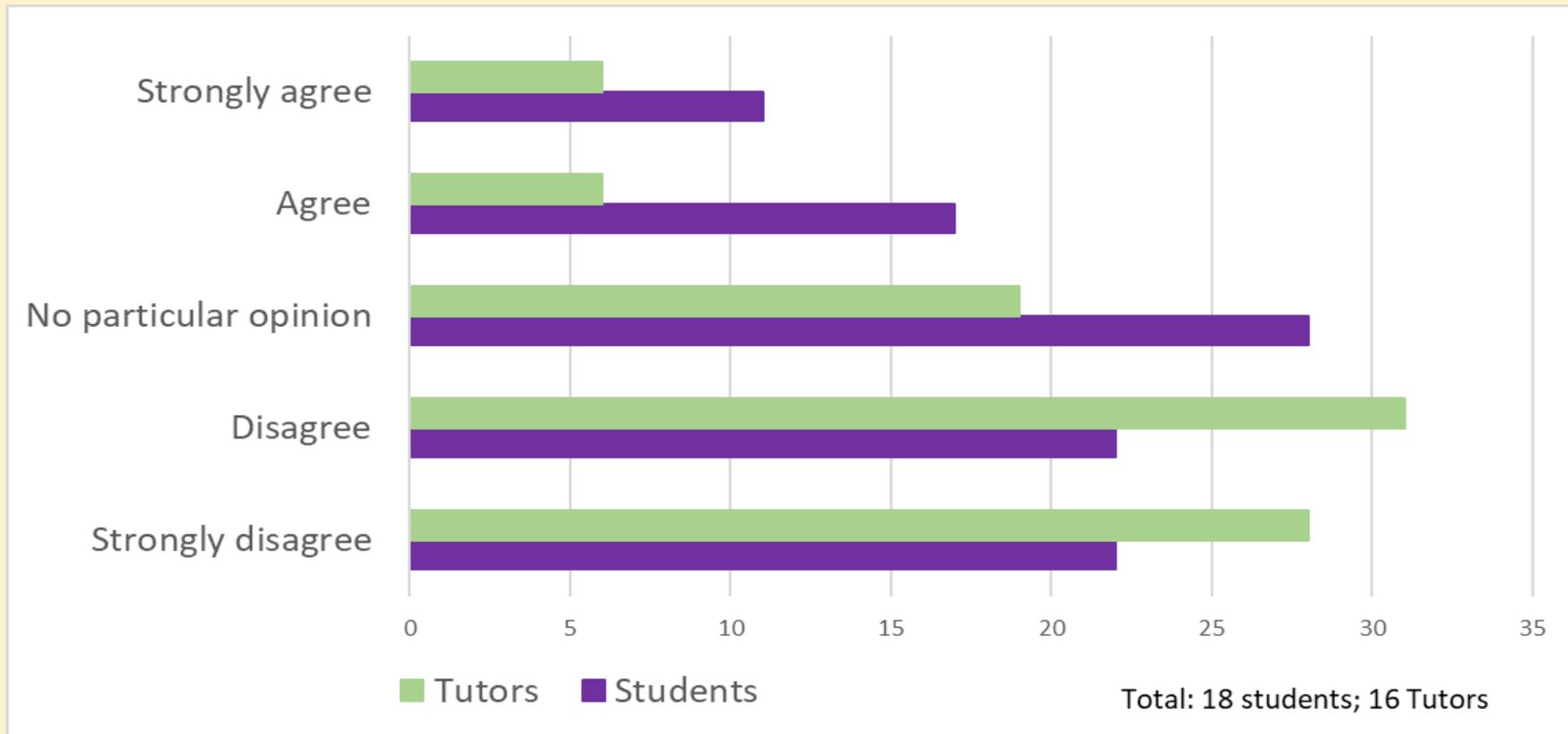
# 3. Initial findings



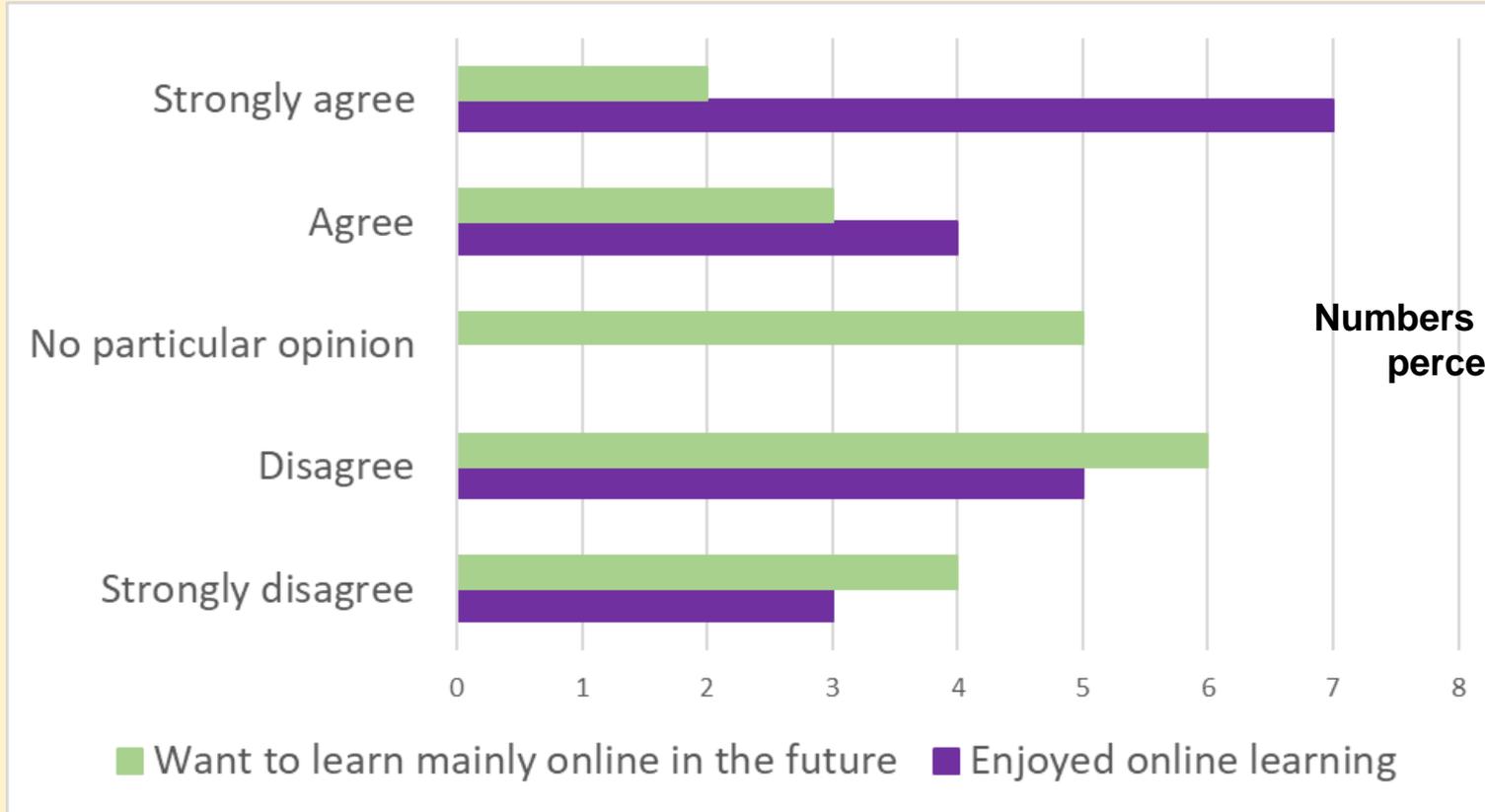
## Percentage of students/tutors who enjoyed learning/teaching online



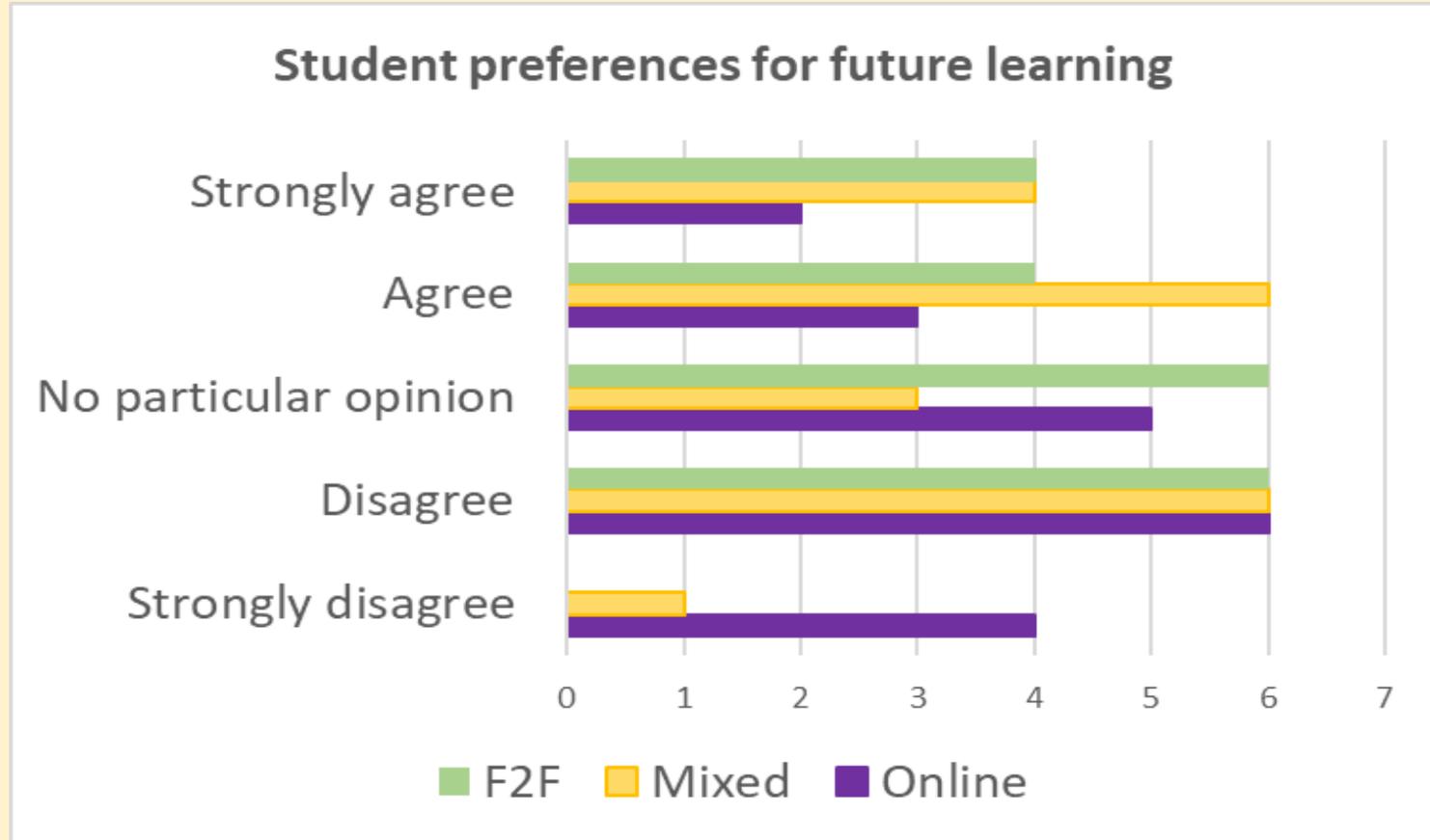
# I want to learn/teach online in the future (%)



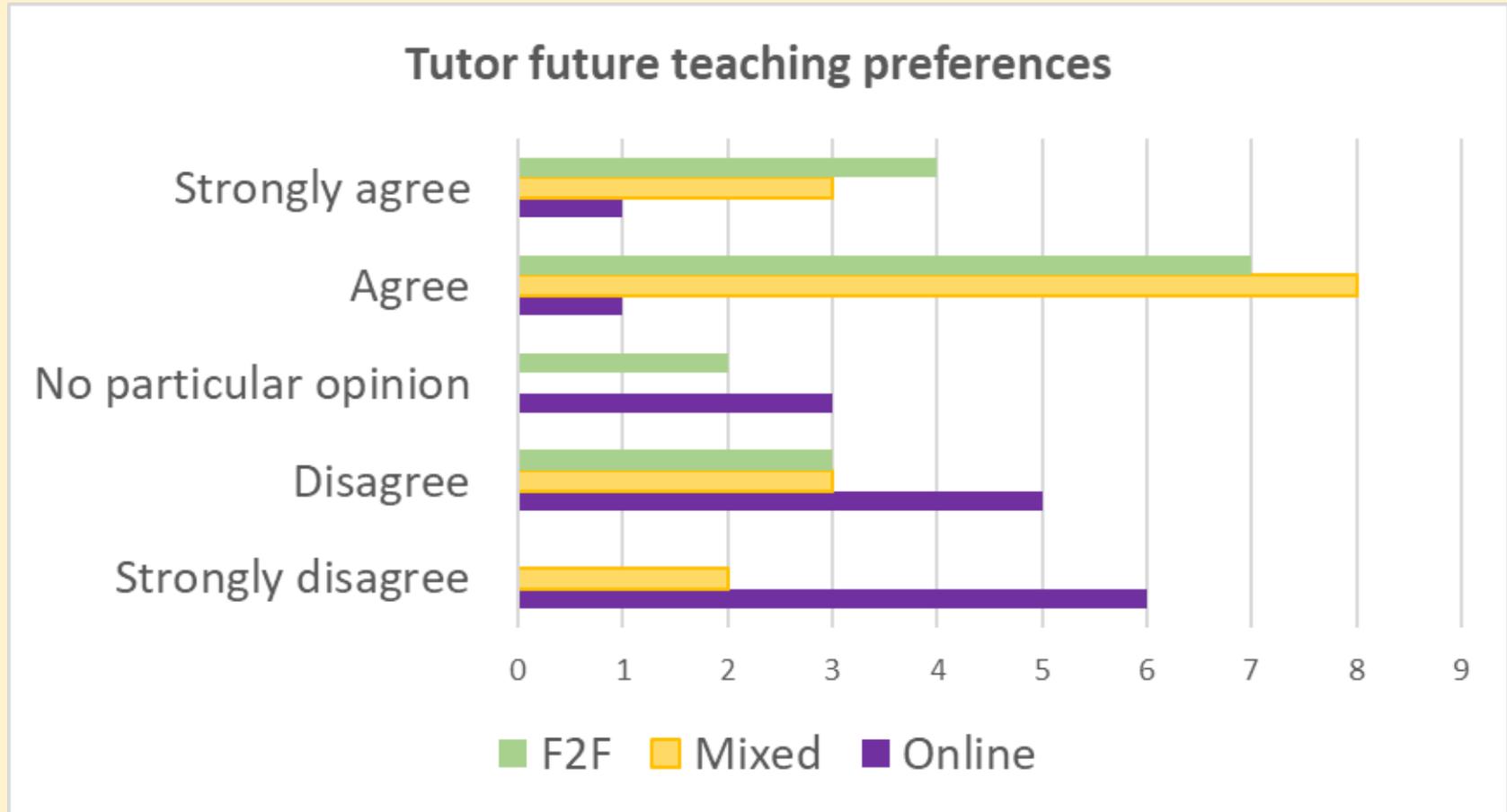
# Comparison of students' enjoyment of online learning with future preferences



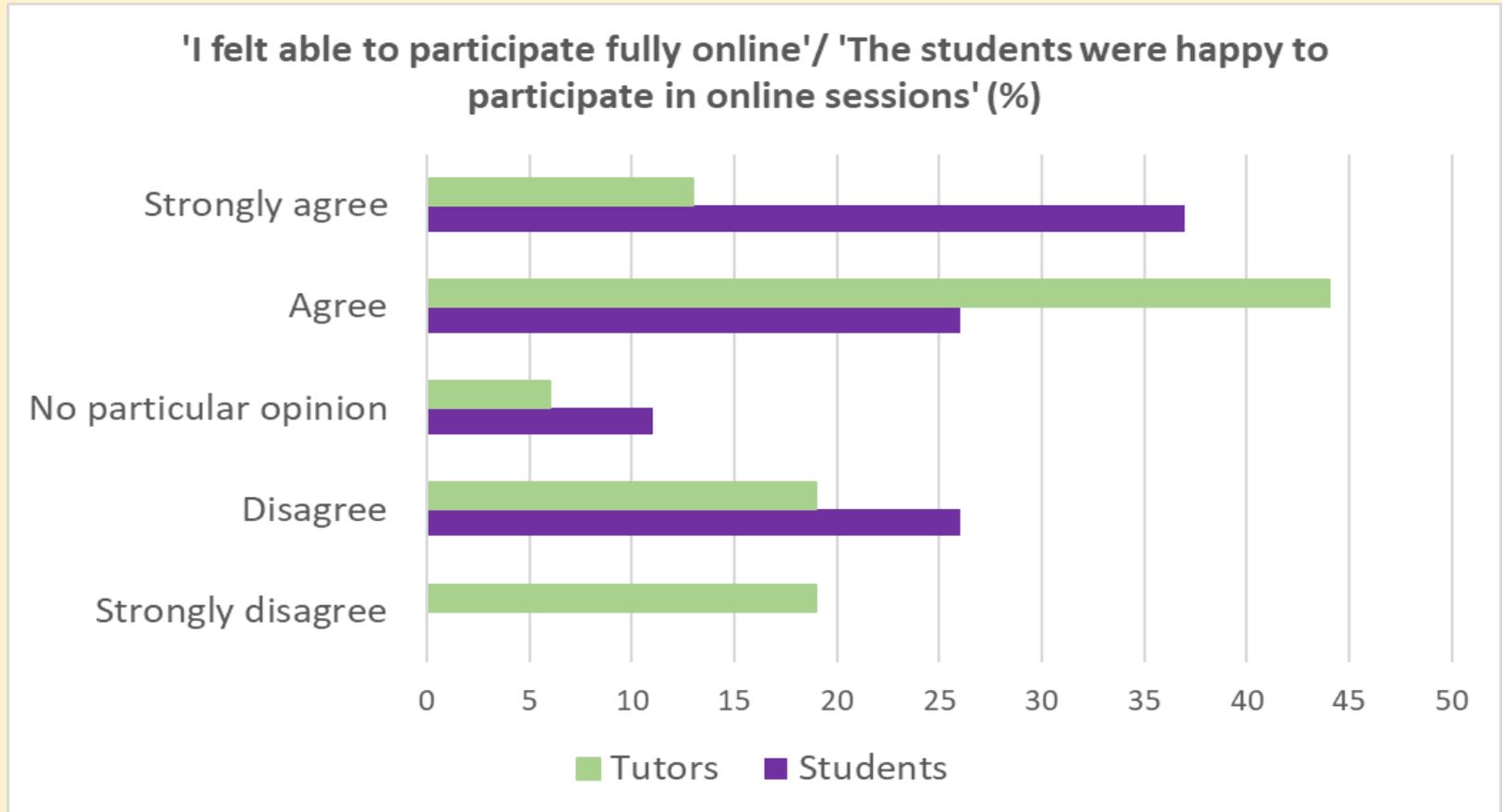
# I want to learn mainly online/mix/F2F..



# I would like to mainly teach online/blended/F2F....



# Perceptions of engagement, tutors and students



## Positive assessments of online learning

- 'I could still be home to support a relative'
- 'Not having to travel so more time overall'
- 'Time. I work from home so it enables me to seamlessly switch from work mode to study mode without having to get anywhere.'
- 'Being able to study a subject and/or at a location that I wouldn't have been able to if it wasn't online.'
- 'I have some social anxieties so being online allowed me to interact at a distance so to speak. I might not have been able to manage a face-to-face event.'
- 'Access without having to fit learning around the availability of public transport.'

# Positive assessments of online teaching

‘I actually felt like a much better communicator when teaching online rather than in person. I think this was because it felt like I was talking on a recording, so I was much more deliberate and careful with my explanations.’

‘No commuting. Students did better at their assessments. Students thanked me after each session.’

‘I enjoyed the flexibility of it - students (mature, online learning, evening learning) could listen in on their phones whilst caring for children or family members. Some were able to listen in whilst working. Although this meant they couldn't interact, they were at least there.’

‘The disembodied nature of online teaching meant that female students, who are generally quiet in our f-2-f sessions, absolutely bossed their online seminars, exploring ideas we never normally get to in person.’

## The downsides (student viewpoint)

‘You cannot really interact as easily with others in the class. There tends to be the problem of accidental interruptions and not always hearing fully what someone has said. ‘(Student)

‘Lack of social interaction. Distracted easily by other tasks.’ (Student)

“Lack of being able to interact and 'read' people. Only one person can talk which can be beneficial but also very 'put on the spot'” (Student)

“I enjoyed everything but sometimes the technology can be challenging. Different institutions use different online learning platforms and they all seem to have their own idiosyncracies.” (Student)

‘Anxiety around tech did not lessen. Break out rooms were hideous and eventually I'd just opt out. In modules where lecturers used them a lot, I stopped attending online.’ (Student)

## Downsides (tutor viewpoint)

‘The slow internet in my area which made using a powerpoint problematic at times. The lack of personal contact and inability to 'read' learners. The formality and awkwardness associated with online teaching. Lack of immediate feedback from learners (eg humour on my part was difficult to gauge). ‘(Tutor)

‘Not being able to see everyone at once when presenting slides was worrying because it was not possible to judge the level of engagement. Mostly though, my concern was that the dynamic that builds up between members of a group was absent ...Students seemed isolated.’ (Tutor)

‘It is nearly impossible to get students to have organic discussions among themselves... The lessons were also much more like Q&A sessions than with face to face -- sometimes it felt like I was being grilled on TV!’ (Tutor)

## Positive assessments from the interviews

**Face to Face:** 'I think because it is my learning style. I'm such a visual learner and I've got such a rich imagination..because I've got scotopic sensitivity syndrome focusing on this screen distracts me and it makes me too tired so I didn't have that same fatigue in the class. I was energized... also I've got synesthesia I could taste these wonderful new concepts in my mouth and it was lovely. '(Student)

**Online:** 'On the one hand, it's it's very convenient if your time is very limited to simply walk, walk into a room in your house, turn a computer on, do the two hours session and and turn it off with with, with with no no time commitment.' (Tutor)

'I mean, I can understand why, you know, I, I can understand that it is more, you know, it is more suitable for you know, for for certain students or students who kind of live abroad and that kind of thing you know and and dog sit.' (Tutor)

## Negative assessments of on-line learning

I mean, all right, if you take a few minutes [for a break], but really it's not the same as trooping out to a common room and talking about something else for 15 minutes whatever. (Tutor)

In a face to face situation, I'm constantly looking at students, expressions and if someone sitting passively at the back, I can look at their face and their shoulders, their body language. And tell if they're hostile or just a bit scared or just very shy and they're terrified they'll be asked something. You know. If you have that week on week you or even month or month, you've got the possibility of gradually including that person rather you know, whereas online there's nothing. (Tutor)

# Other contributory factors identified in research

- Existing traditions and expectations of teaching (e.g. format, delivery, structure)
- Diversity of types of courses and on-line provision
- Culture of 'not complaining' - 'they're doing their best', 'keep calm and carry on'
- Gender dynamics (level and nature of engagement)
- International students and students with English as a second language (engagement)
- Multiple streams of information/ interaction (eg - 'chat box' advantage or distraction)
- How to gauge issues such as 'travel/ sociability/ convenience (e.g. end of need for travel cited by both tutors and students)

# Experience and appreciation

- The **experience of remote learning in the pandemic was not ‘one thing’** (and lots of intersection with gender, ethnicity, teaching culture, accessibility)
- **Disjunction between positivity about pandemic experience and future plans** - enjoyment of online learning did not equate to wanting to learn online in the future (‘This course was in early lockdown so it was great to be able to learn from home’)
- **Students saw more practical benefits of online learning** (no travel, more time, save money)
- **Tutors were more concerned about the how online affected their teaching** (inability to ‘read’ student engagement)
- **Both tutors and student missed interpersonal element of F2F teaching**

# Where we are going next?

- Continue to seek tutor and student survey responses (could you help?)- we're aiming for around 50 responses
- Further interviews (aim for 8-10 student and 8-10 tutor interviews)
- Nuanced analysis of comments from transcripts
- Complete review of literature for on-line provision in adult education and impact of the pandemic
- Drawing in social media exchanges and debates

