

# Aimhigher West Midlands: UniFest External Review 2017



## What is UniFest?

The Aimhigher partnership coordinates an annual programme of university summer schools called UniFest, to give young people from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to fully experience the world of higher education by living and working on campus for up to 3 days. UniFest events are delivered by five universities: Aston University, Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, University of Birmingham and the University of Worcester. UniFest is an important part of the wider Aimhigher programme in the West Midlands, which is funded by partner universities. UniFest students are selected by their schools because they have the potential to consider university but need additional support as they come from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities that are under-represented in higher education.

This report summarises the evaluation of the 2017 UniFest programme. It explores who attended and the immediate impact of the experience on their educational and career aspirations, motivation, knowledge and confidence. It very powerfully indicates that attending UniFest has a positive impact on young people, generating large positive shifts in attitudes, knowledge and understanding.

Aimhigher will track the UniFest cohort over the coming years to see how they perform in their GCSE and Level 3 studies, and if they do indeed go on to higher education.

Aimhigher would like to thank the many staff and students at partner universities whose hard work and dedication makes UniFest possible. Thanks are also due to colleagues in local authorities, schools, academies and colleges, for their work to identify UniFest students and support their attendance, and to the parents and carers of the students, for their trust and support.

## Executive Summary

**6** UniFest events delivered across 5 universities  
**271** learners attended UniFest

## Outcomes

<b>11%</b>	Increase in learners planning/considering to go into university / HE (inc. higher level/degree apprenticeship)
<b>62%</b>	Increase in learners that understand what life would be like at university / HE
<b>18%</b>	Increase in learners that think University / HE is for people like me
<b>35%</b>	Increase in learners that know how to apply to university / HE
<b>35%</b>	Increase in learners who felt they would obtain the grades needed to get into university / HE
<b>49%</b>	Increase in learners that know enough about university / HE to decide whether to go or not
<b>19%</b>	Increase in learners who felt they could cope with the level of study at university / HE
<b>13%</b>	Increase in learners who felt less worried about debt and the affordability of university / HE
<b>97.6%</b>	of learners say attending has improved their aspirations for the future
<b>91.3%</b>	of learners say attending has improved their attainment
<b>95.5%</b>	of learners say attending has improved their confidence in their academic ability
<b>98.8%</b>	of learners say attending has improved their social skills in terms of meeting new people

*'It's shown me that higher education is for people like me and regardless of my own differences I will be able to achieve it.'*

**96.8%**  
of learners were very satisfied /  
satisfied with UniFest

## Who Attended?

### Recruitment and attendance by event

Event name	Original Capacity	Actual places offered		Attendance*	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%
Total	320	309	96.6%	271	84.7%

*\*figures show attendance against capacity*

*54.6% of attendees were female and 45.4% were male (in 2016 56.1% female and 43.9% male)*

*All attendees were from Year 10*

*60.7% of attendees were BME and 39.3% white (in 2016 47.5% BME and 52.5% White)*

## Evaluation Findings

### Methodology

Learners that participated in Unifest events completed a paper based pre and post event evaluation. The evaluation questionnaires consisted of a standard set of questions which were repeated within the pre and post event questionnaires. These were included to identify the short –term impact of learner engagement within UniFest. Questions aimed to identify learners' shifts in attitudes in terms of aspirations to HE, confidence towards HE and knowledge/understanding of HE. Other questions also explored learners' perceptions of the quality of the events in terms of academic/social activities and overall satisfaction. Pre event questionnaires were distributed to learners via post, parents' evenings and at the start of the event. Post event questionnaires were completed at the end of each event.

98.5% of learners that attended UniFest completed a pre event evaluation (97.4% in 2016) and 97.0% completed a post event evaluation (96.0% in 2016). 95.6% of learners completed both the pre and post event evaluations (93.7% in 2016).

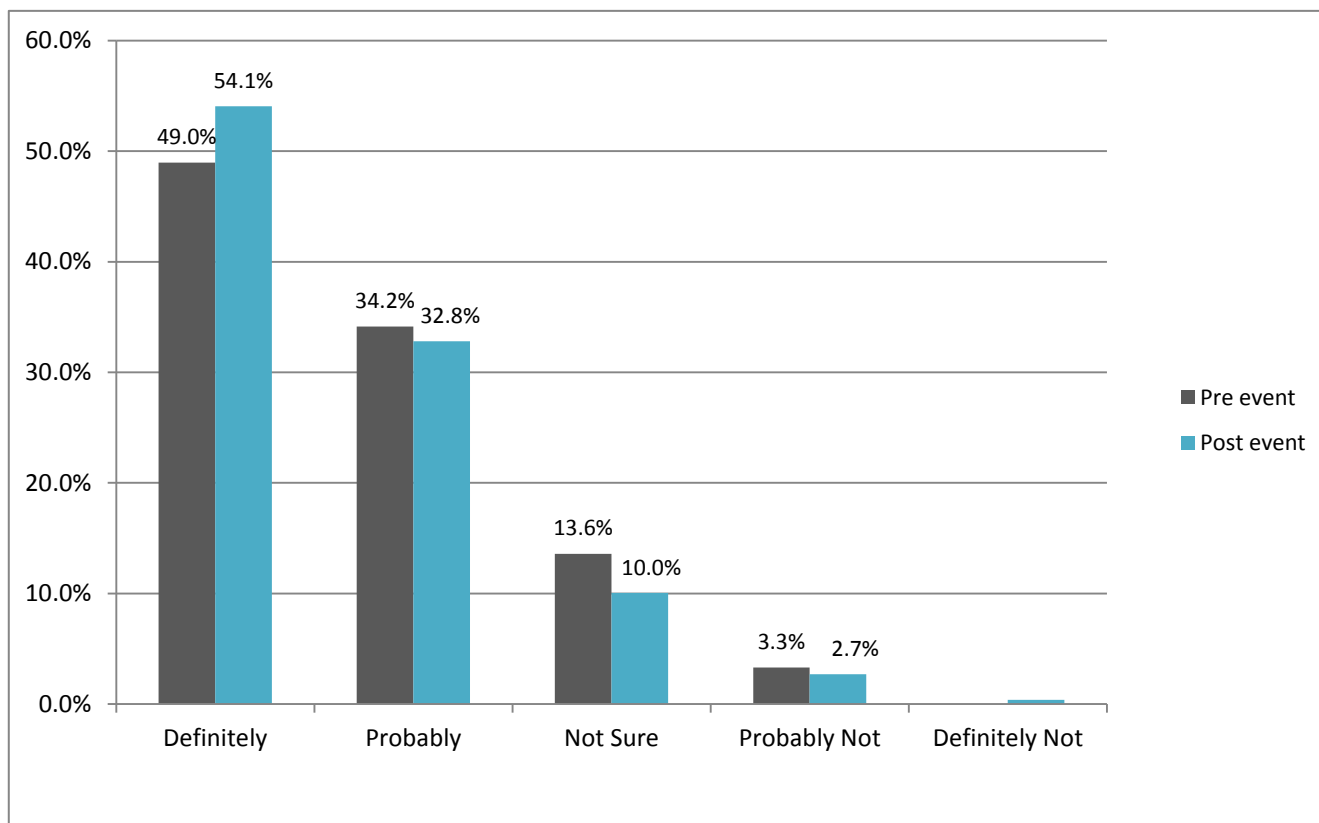
### Evaluation response rates

HEI	Number of learners that attended	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
		Learners who completed pre event evaluation		Learners who completed post event evaluation		Learners who completed both the pre and post event	
Total	271	267	98.5%	263	97.0%	259	95.6%

## What Difference Did it Make?

The following analysis only includes the responses of learners who completed both the pre and post event questionnaires

### % I plan to go into university / higher education (e.g. degree or higher level/degree apprenticeship)



*This made me consider university as an option in the future*

*... It has helped me decide to go to uni in the future and follow my dream to be a teacher.*

### % I plan to go into university / higher education (e.g. degree or higher level/degree apprenticeship)

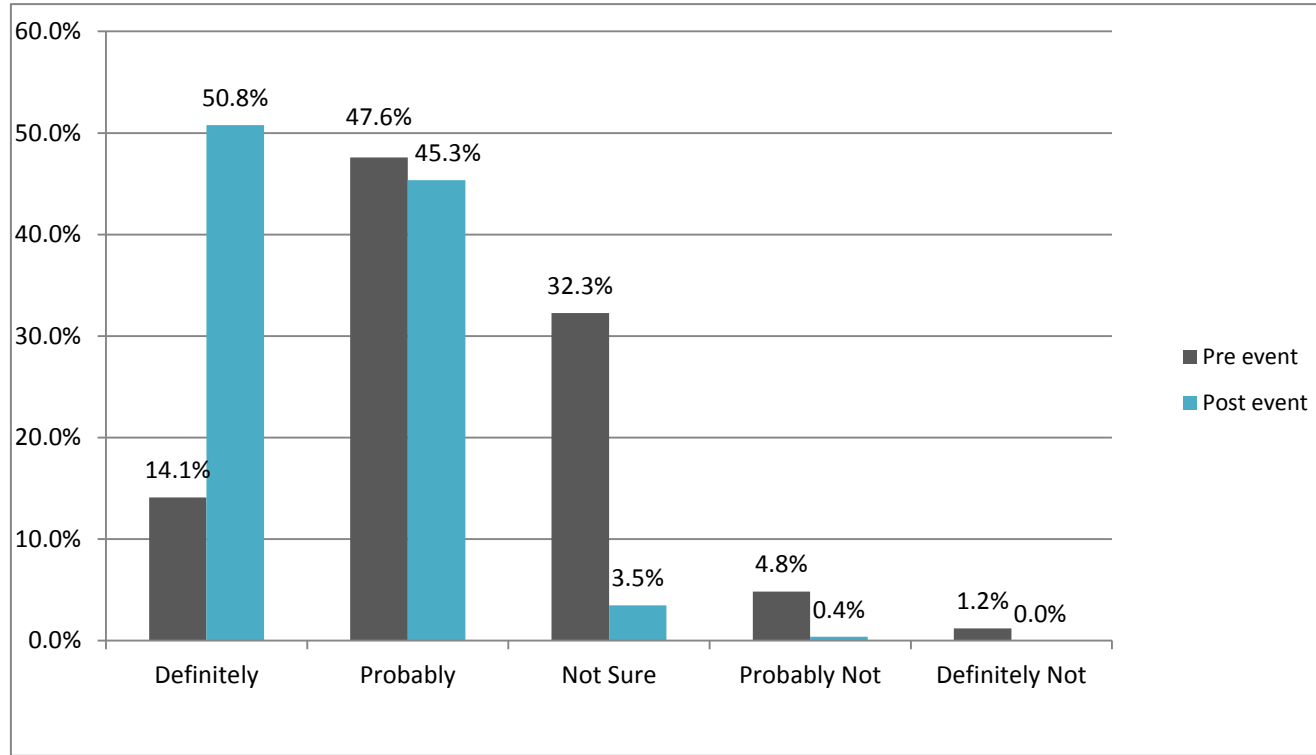
Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	49.0%	34.2%	13.6%	3.3%	0.0%
Post event	54.1%	32.8%	10.0%	2.7%	0.4%

No Response

12

**Post event 86.9% of learners planned to go to university / higher education (11.4% increase)**

**% I understand what life would be like at university / higher education**



*It was a great experience and it has turned and changed my future career aspirations and given me a taste of what university can be like.*

*Made me become more confident. Made new friends and helped me understand university life better.*

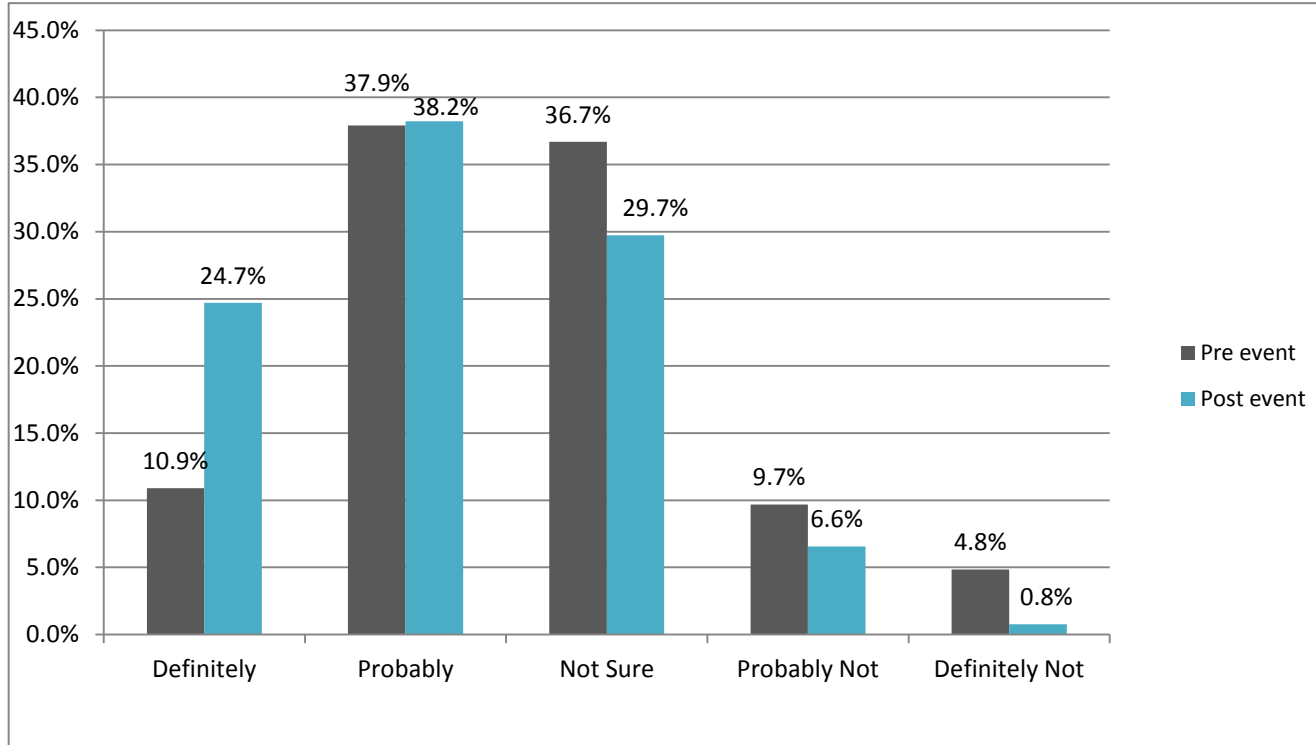
**% I understand what life would be like at university / higher education**

Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	14.1%	47.6%	32.3%	4.8%	1.2%
Post event	50.8%	45.3%	3.5%	0.4%	0.0%

No Response 13

**Post event 96.1% of learners understood what life would be like at university / higher education (62.1% increase)**

**% I understand how to apply to university / higher education**



**% I understand how to apply to university / higher education**

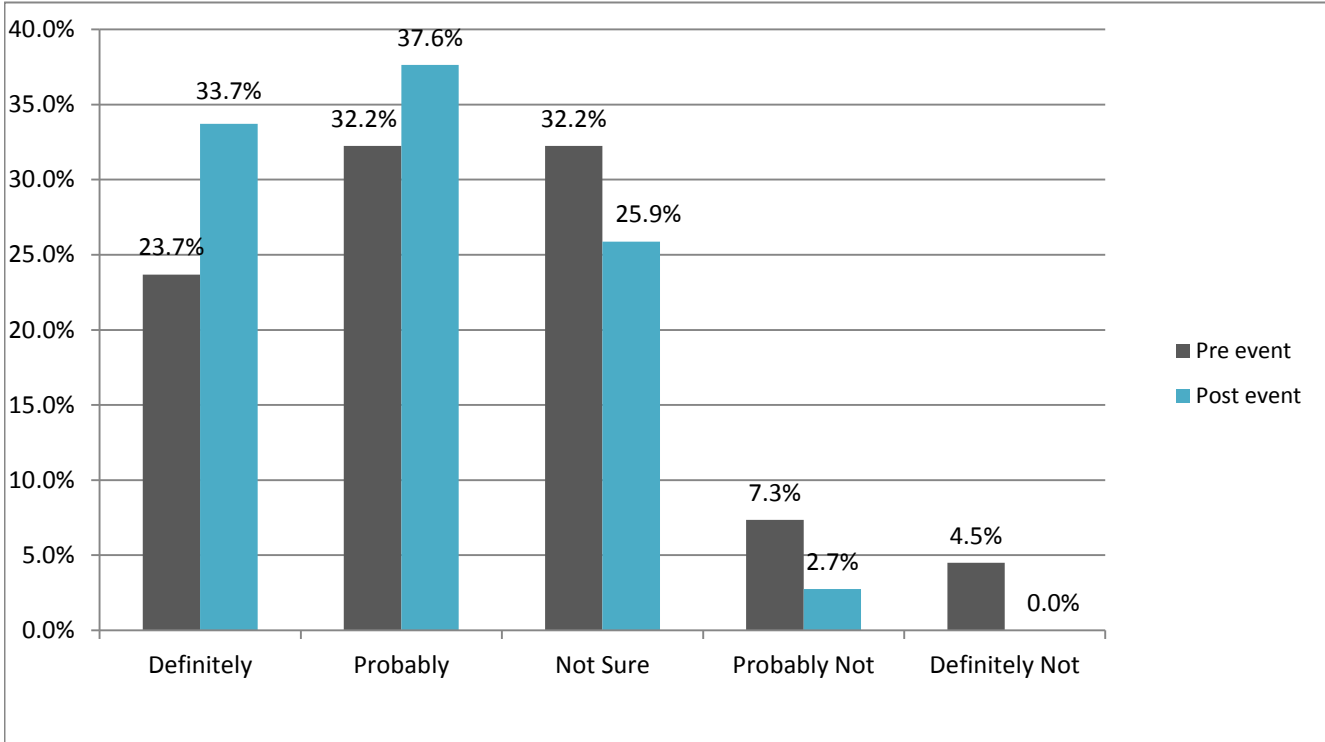
Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	10.9%	37.9%	36.7%	9.7%	4.8%
Post event	24.7%	38.2%	29.7%	6.6%	0.8%

No Response

12

**Post event 62.9% of learners understood how to apply to university / higher education (34.7% increase)**

**% I know what qualifications / grades I would need**



**% I know what qualifications / grades I would need**

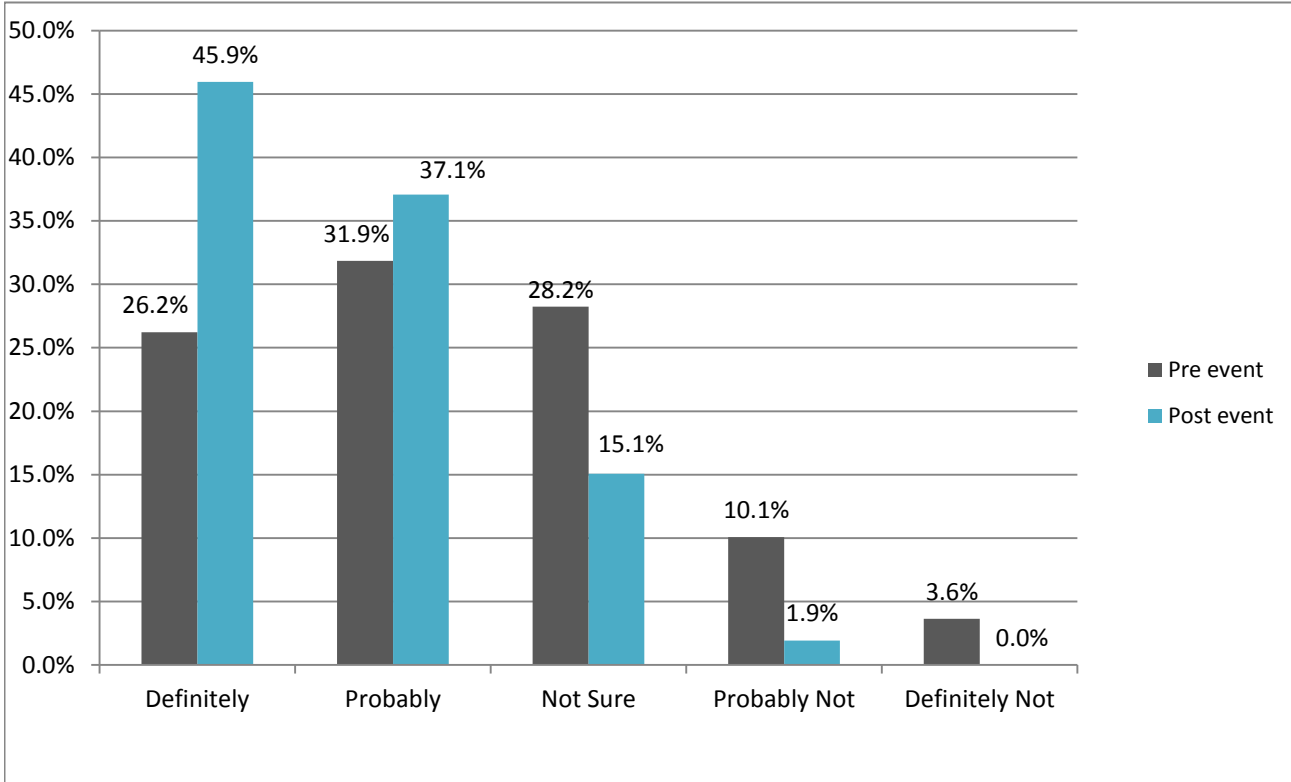
Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	23.7%	32.2%	32.2%	7.3%	4.5%
Post event	33.7%	37.6%	25.9%	2.7%	0.0%

No Response 16

**Post event 71.4% of learners knew what qualifications / grades they would need to go to university / higher education (32.8% increase)**



**% I know enough about university / higher education to decide whether to go or not**



*I am aware of how university life is and how it will benefit me.*

*The whole experience has helped me decide and consolidate what to do in the future.*

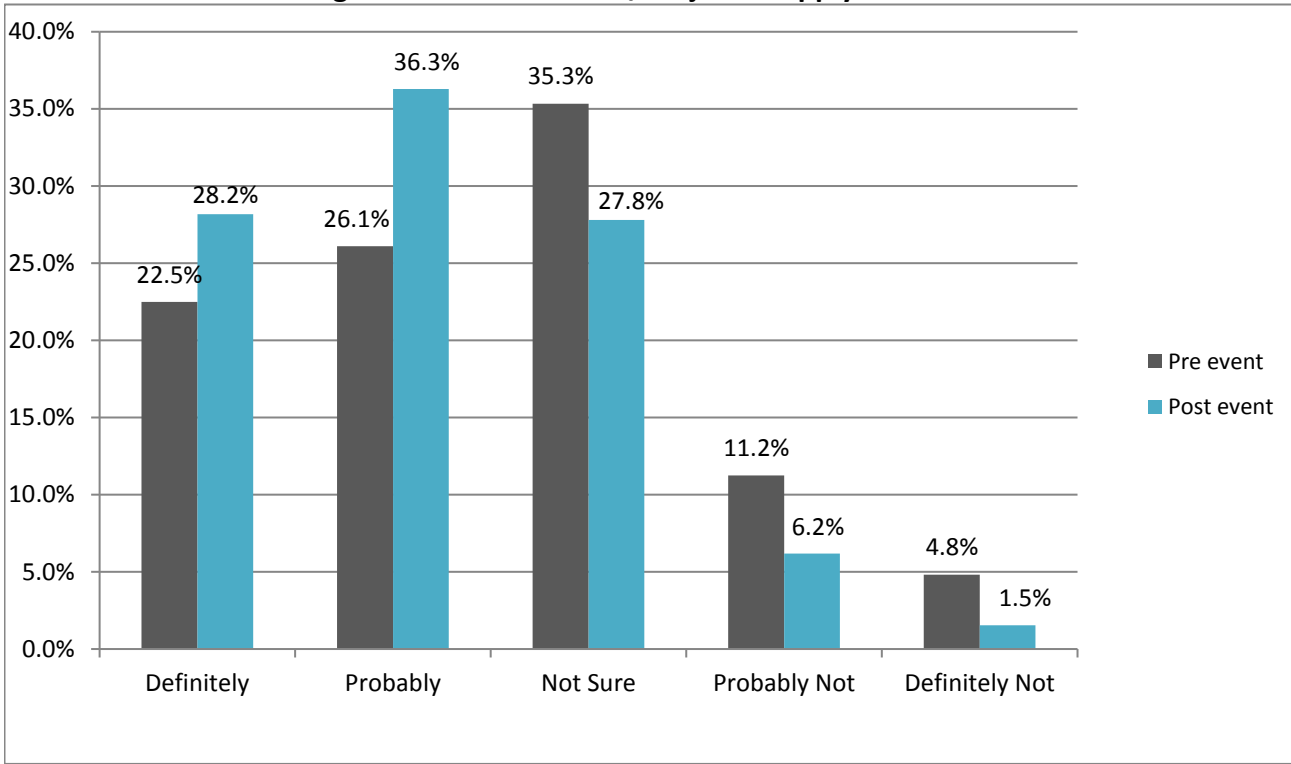
**% I know enough about university / higher education to decide whether to go or not**

Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	26.2%	31.9%	28.2%	10.1%	3.6%
Post event	45.9%	37.1%	15.1%	1.9%	0.0%

No Response 12

**Post event 83% of learners knew enough about university / higher education to decide whether or not go (49.3% increase)**

**% I am clear on which higher education course/subject to apply for**



*I have met new people and I have discovered interesting subjects such as Pharmacy.*

*Understanding a student's university life, understanding the subjects the university*

*...learnt about the different subjects you could do at university*

**% I am clear on which higher education course/subject to apply for**

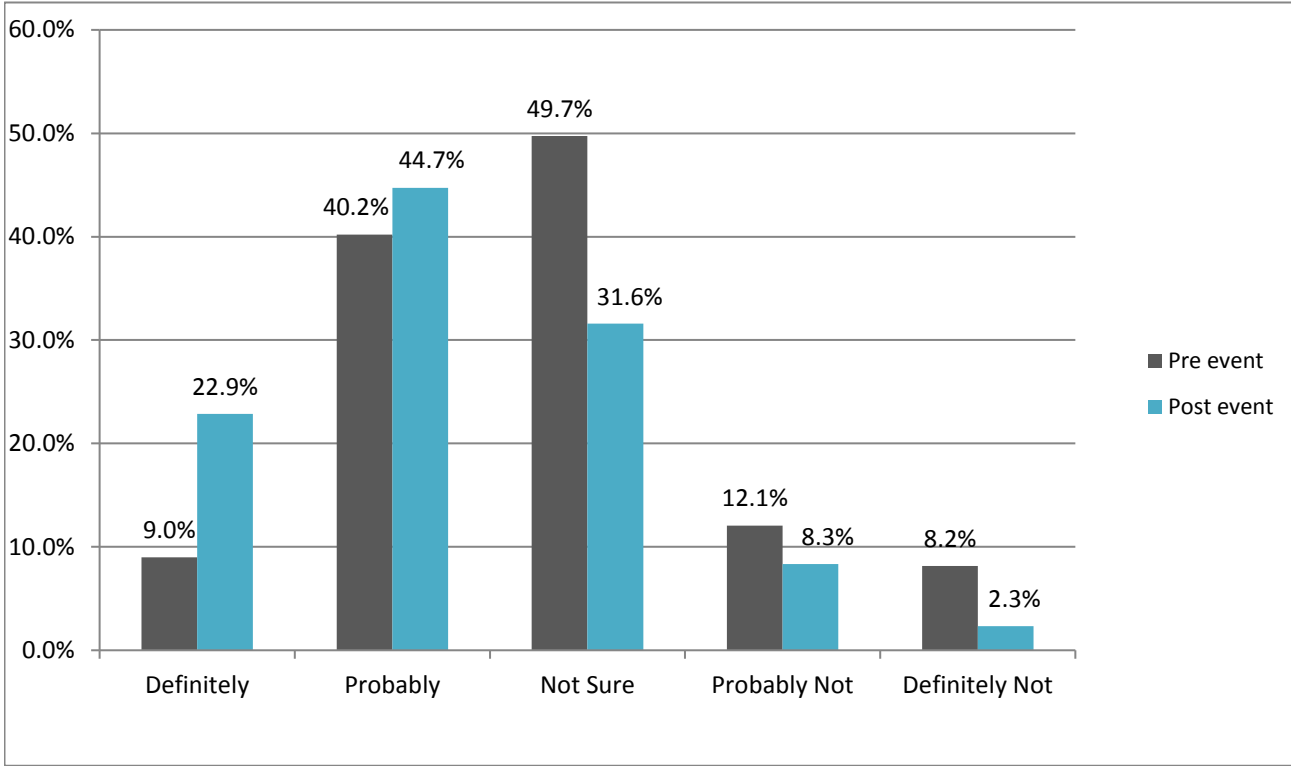
Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	22.5%	26.1%	35.3%	11.2%	4.8%
Post event	28.2%	36.3%	27.8%	6.2%	1.5%

No Response

12

**Post event 64.5% of learners were clear on which higher education course / subject to apply for (38% increase)**

**% I am clear on which higher education institutions I want to apply for**



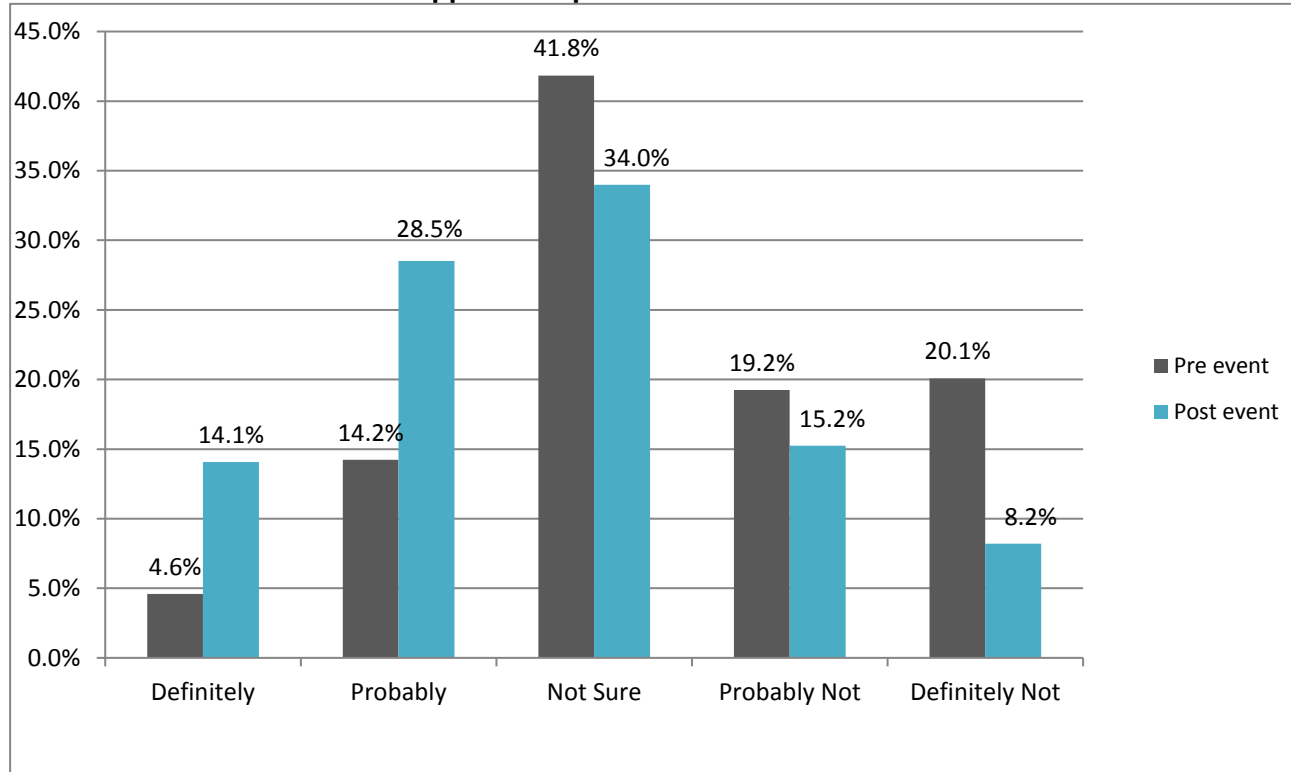
**% I am clear on which higher education institutions I want to apply for**

Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	9.0%	40.2%	49.7%	12.1%	8.2%
Post event	22.9%	44.7%	31.6%	8.3%	2.3%

No Response 43

**Post event 67.6% of learners were clear on which higher education institution they want to apply to (73.5% increase)**

**% I understand how the UCAS application process works**



**% I understand how the UCAS application process works**

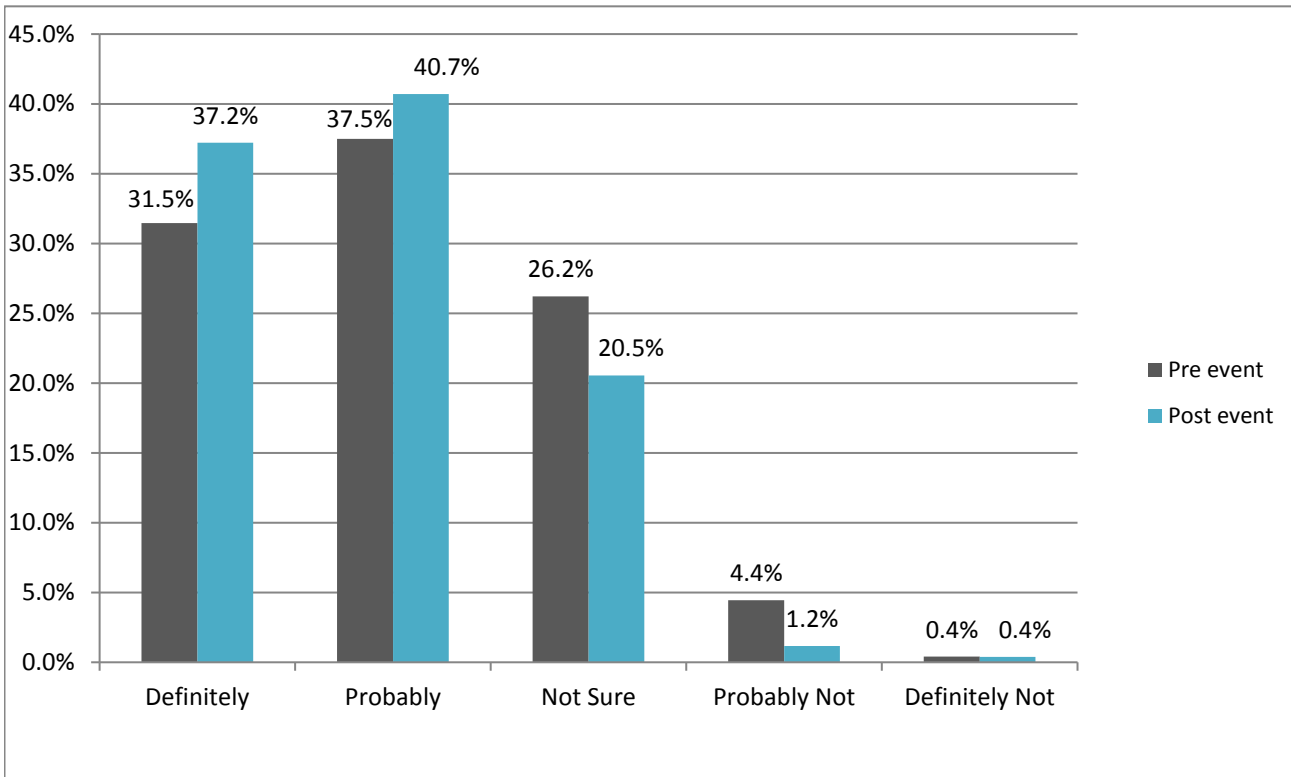
Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	4.6%	14.2%	41.8%	19.2%	20.1%
Post event	14.1%	28.5%	34.0%	15.2%	8.2%

No Response

15

**Post event 42.6% of learners were clear on how the UCAS application process works (142.2% increase)**

**% University / higher education is for people like me**



*It's shown me that higher education is for people like me, and regardless of my own differences I will be able to achieve it.*

*Coming to Unifest has broadened my viewpoint on uni and opened my eyes to possible opportunities*

**% University / higher education is for people like me**

Evaluation	Definitely	Probably	Not Sure	Probably Not	Definitely Not
Pre event	31.5%	37.5%	26.2%	4.4%	0.4%
Post event	37.2%	40.7%	20.5%	1.2%	0.4%

No Response 13

**Post event 77.9% of learners thought that university / higher education is for people like them (17.5% increase)**

## Barriers to participation in Higher Education

Data below summarises shifts in learners' attitudes at the end of Unifest. Response show that post event there was a:

- 35%** increase in learners who felt they would obtain the required grades to go into university / higher education
- 19%** increase in learners who felt confident in their ability to cope with the level of study at university / higher education
- 13%** increase in learners who felt less worried about debt and the affordability of university / higher education
- 8%** decrease in learners who felt they would miss their family/friends/home if they went to university / higher education
- 5%** decrease in learners who felt they live too far away to travel to university / higher education
- 7%** decrease in learners who prefer to find a job, apprenticeship or training

## How did UniFest benefit learners?

Do you feel that taking part in UniFest will help you in any of the following ways?

Statements	Lots of improvement	Some improvement	No improvement	Not Sure
Improved my aspirations for the future	49.4%	48.2%	0.0%	2.4%
Improved my attainment	41.5%	49.8%	0.0%	8.7%
Improved my study skills	43.8%	50.4%	0.0%	5.8%
Improved my confidence in my academic ability	47.5%	47.9%	0.0%	4.5%
Improved my social skills in terms of meeting new people	63.8%	35.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Improved my motivation to succeed	56.4%	39.0%	0.0%	4.6%
Improved my behaviour and attitude to learning	47.6%	46.2%	0.0%	6.2%
Improved my knowledge of higher education (study, finances, student life)	52.0%	44.3%	0.0%	3.7%

Summarised below are a selection of comments made by learners about their summer school experience.

*Helped me socialise with people that I never thought I would talk to*

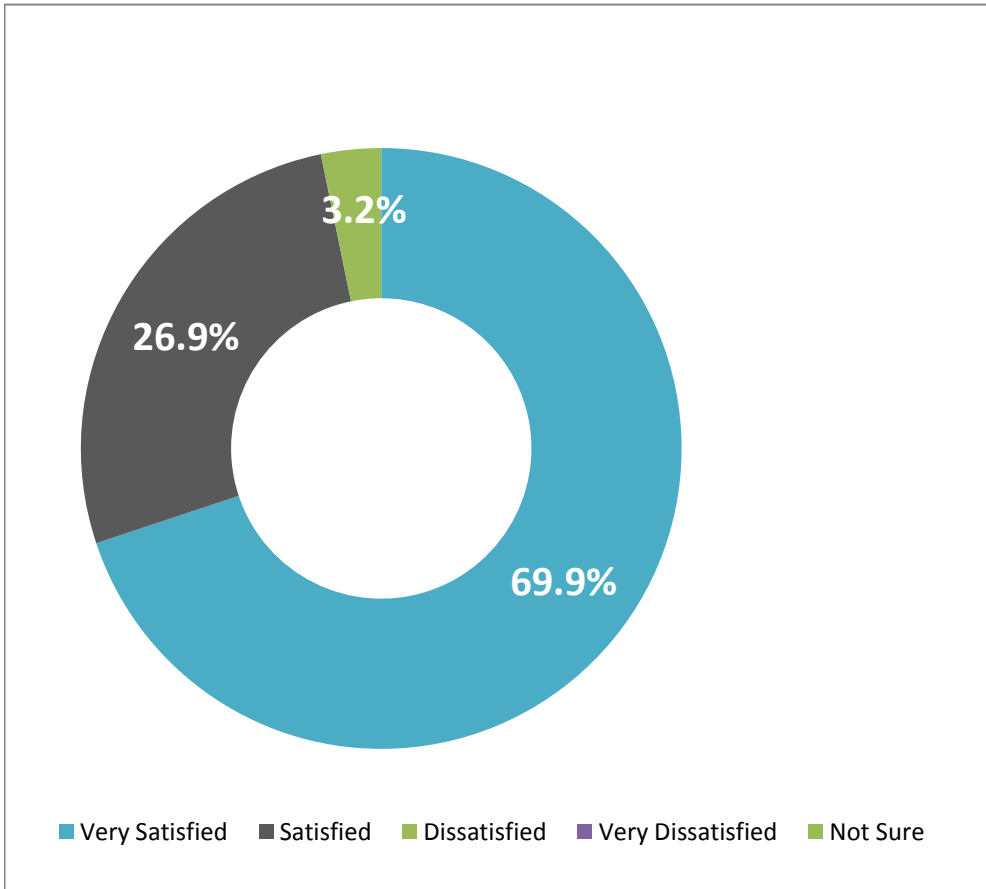
*I made new friends and met new people. I now know the determination and hard work that is needed for university. It was a fun experience. I enjoyed it.*

*To manage money and learnt about the different subjects you could do at university*

*Made me more confident and made new friends*

*My confidence has improved majorly. I have more knowledge and it has motivated me even more to want to go to uni. I have met great new friends.*

## How satisfied are you with UniFest?



*Everything worked well. Benefited me socially and improved my confidence.*

*To manage money and learnt about the different subjects you could do at university.*

*100% confident with my future.*

*I don't know how to explain how happy I am with UniFest.*

*...I have been able to be more confident with other people and enjoy the time with new people and my ambassadors.*

*Found it enjoyable and a great learning experience.*

**96.8%**  
of learners were very satisfied or satisfied with UniFest

*I really enjoyed learning and having fun.*



**Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements**

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The communication link between myself and the university prior to UniFest was useful	39.8%	42.7%	16.2%	1.2%	0.0%
I felt the sessions were aimed at my level	33.9%	47.0%	16.7%	2.4%	0.0%
I felt the length of the sessions were right for my level	30.4%	44.9%	17.0%	5.7%	2.0%
I felt there was a good mix of lectures, practical and social activities	41.2%	38.8%	13.6%	5.6%	0.8%
The social activities helped me make new friends and feel involved	56.4%	32.8%	7.2%	2.8%	0.8%
I felt safe during my summer school event*	68.4%	28.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%